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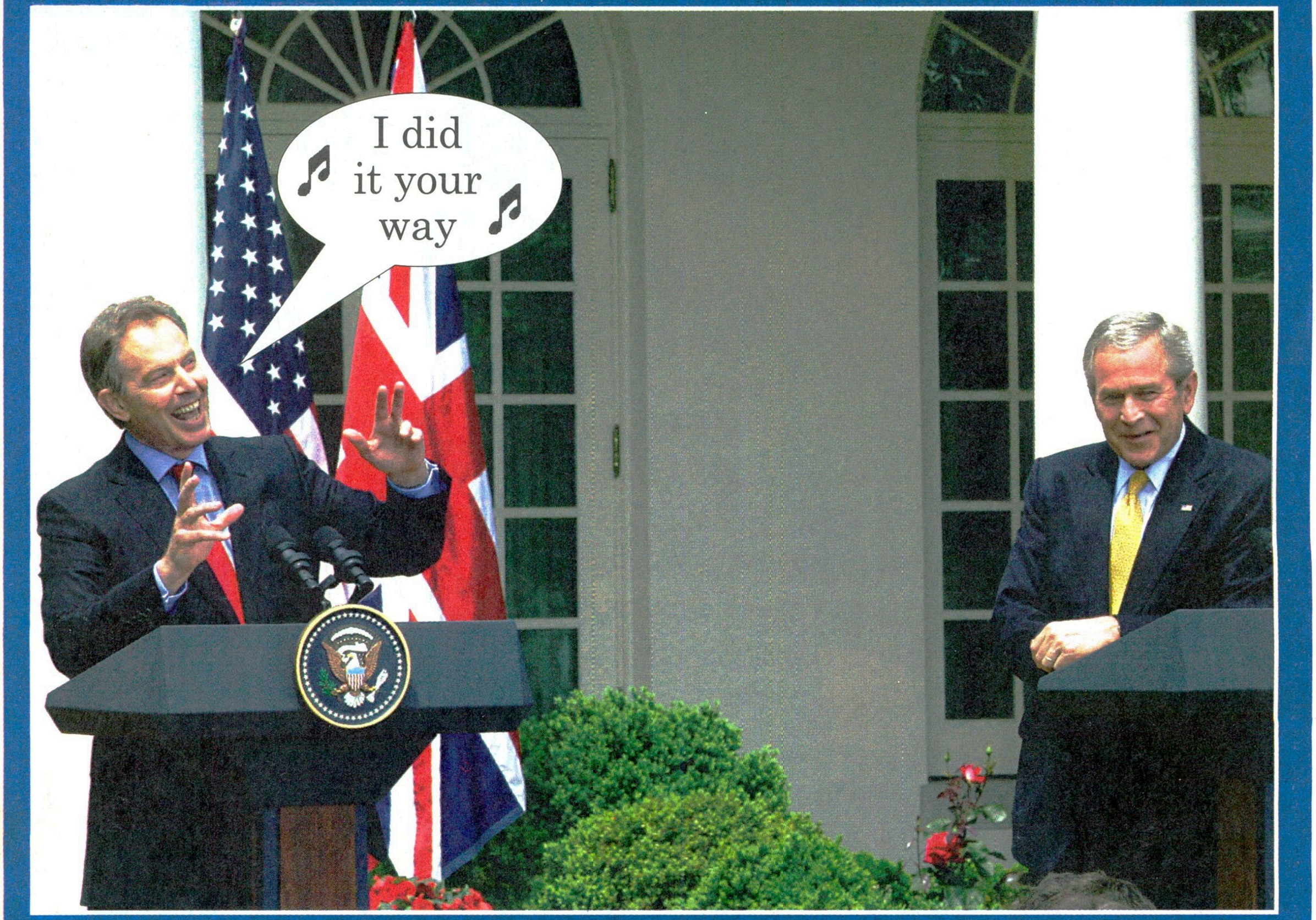

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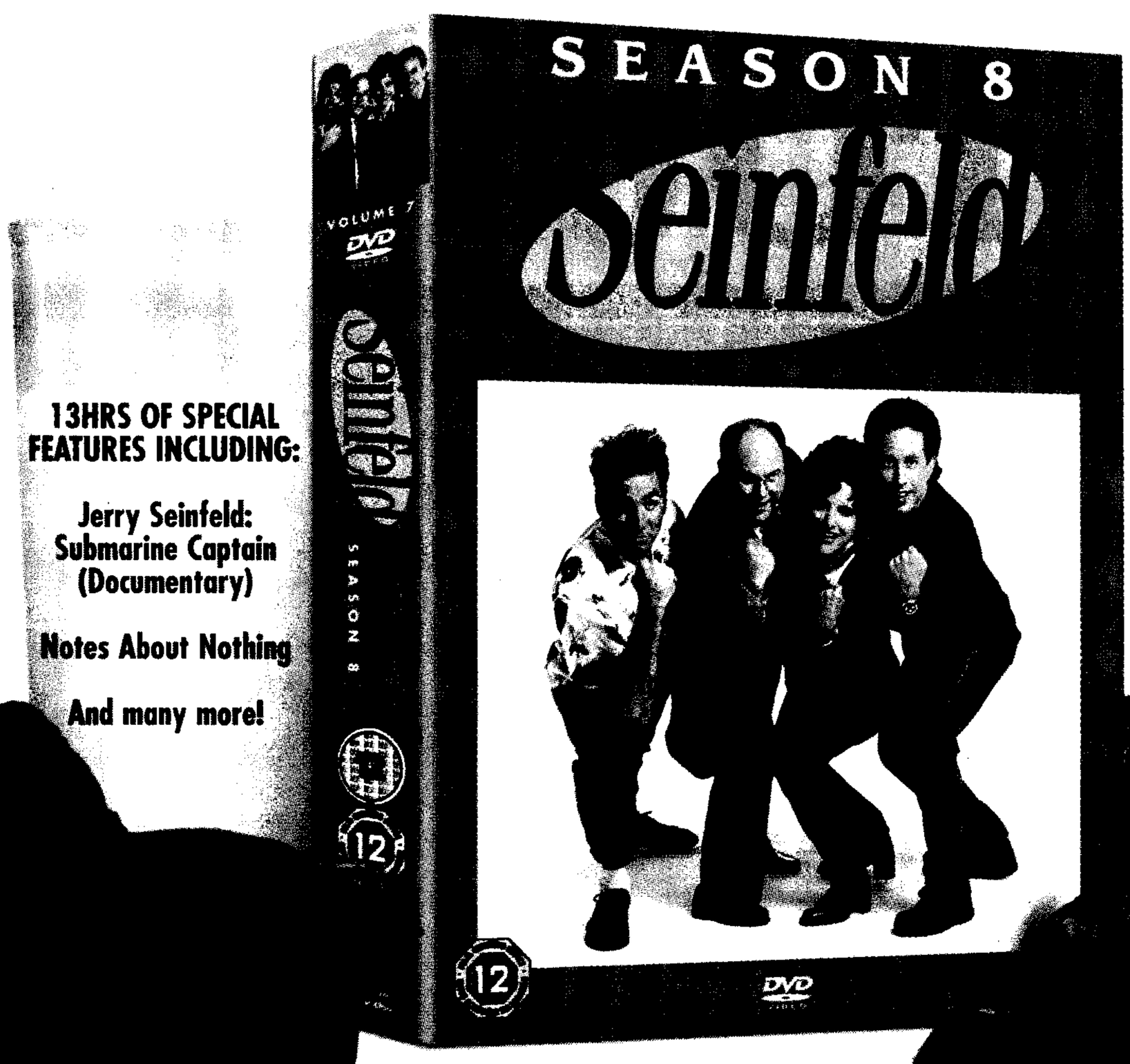

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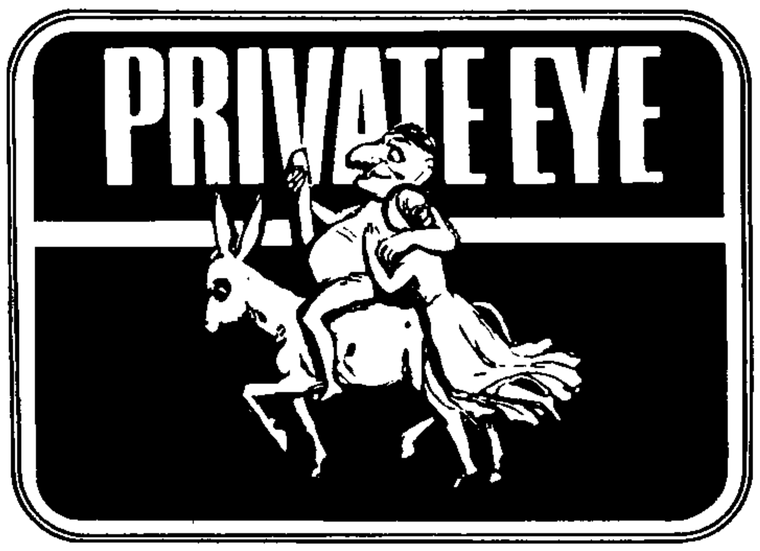

The long good buy...

■ **Ratbiter on why there's nothing Left** 6
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GORDON BROWN's imminent arrival at Number Ten is causing headaches for the arch sexer-upper of documents, Alastair Campbell. He is currently engaged in a frantic race to sex-*down* sections of his diaries.

The soon-to-be-published memoirs of Tony Blair's former spin doctor make regular damning references to the prime minister-elect; and Campbell – to whom the "Brown is psychologically flawed" label has been attributed – is busy with his editor cutting out all the interesting bits.

Brown had hoped that regulations preventing publication of embarrassing political memoirs would stop Campbell's diary getting into bookshops altogether – but for some reason Sir Gus O'Donnell, head of the civil service, has forgotten to release them.

There is still one person fighting the prime minister-elect's corner, however. Blair's former pollster Lord (Philip) Gould, who holidayed with Campbell in Scotland over Easter, is most anxious that the diaries should *not* be published – and he spent the entire holiday telling Campbell so.

On the other hand Gould's missus, Gail Rebuck, is all in favour of Campbell going ahead. After all, as chief executive of Random House, it is she who will be publishing the book.

MIGHT we already know the first casualty of Gordon Brown's campaign to "restore trust" in public life?

Having exposed the first-class globe-trotting of Sir John Bourn, head of the National Audit Office and the country's top public spending watchdog (see last *Eye*), we can now reveal the luxury he enjoys on his travels at taxpayers' expense.

What's more, he's been caught out being economical with the actualité in an attempt to justify his junketing. (For the full story, see *In The Back*, page 27).

Bourn's reputation for probity, which saw Blair appoint him as his ministerial sleaze adviser after David Blunkett's indiscretion with a first class train ticket last year, now looks some way short of the high standards austere Gordon has promised.

GORDON BROWN's friend Ed Balls, a sure bet for the Cabinet, is doing little to boost his "old" Labour credentials in the party.

His latest move has been to hand over more regulation of the City to... vested interests in the City! His new taxpayer-funded International Centre for Financial Regulation is to run with the help of handouts from such darlings of high finance as Prudential (pensions mis-seller), Citigroup (fined for rigging the bond market), Aberdeen Asset Management (mis-seller of risky split capital trusts), and US banks Morgan Stanley (fined for bent analysis of stocks it owned) and JP Morgan (the brains behind Enron's off-balance sheet scamming). A banker, Mervyn Davies of Standard Chartered, has been appointed to represent these "donor interests".

So much for True Labour. Under Brown, business will be New Labour as ever.

AS the departing prime minister starts to think about his resignation honours list, so too does Matthew Freud, the PR fixer.

The hospitable Freud would dearly love a gong – and he may indeed have earned one by inviting star-struck Tony to so many parties and dinners with celebs and tycoons.

Another point in Freud's favour: his father-in-law happens to be Rupert Murdoch. The Dirty Digger can't be rewarded for his support – he's an American citizen and doesn't have much time for baubles anyway. But Blair can show his gratitude to Murdoch's friends and family.

The man likeliest to benefit in fact is Les Hinton, who runs the Digger's UK empire. "No one has done more for Blair in the media," sighs an admirer. Can a knighthood be far away?

EYE TOLD YOU SO

A CABINET Office memo obtained by *Private Eye* shows the government has finally admitted what *Eye* readers have known for years: Whitehall wastes billions on useless consultants.

Cabinet Secretary and Britain's top civil servant Sir Gus O'Donnell has written a stern memo to the heads of all government departments. "I have serious concerns that the public sector can be a lax client in relation to consultancy services; that there has been enormous growth in the public sector's use of consultants in recent year; and that we may too often be using consultants in circumstances where civil servants could do the same job at much less cost."

So what made Sir Gus see the light? After a series of *Eye* stories on the fortunes made by consultants at the expense of the taxpayer and a book, *Plundering the Public Sector* by consultant-turned-whistleblower David Craig (with a helpful *Eye* hack) exposing some of their methods, last year the National Audit Office finally examined the scandal. The bean-counters found a total absence of control on consultancy spending or any measure of whether the £1,000+ per day suits were worth the money.

Sir Gus's letter to Whitehall colleagues reveals that he has set up a "cross-departmental project to provide tools, training and sharing of good practice on all aspects of working with consultants". But will it work? It will be run by the Office of Government Commerce, which gets a commission from departments using consultants (see *Eye* 1182) and the Home Office, itself heavily criticised in the NAO report and hardly best placed to tell anybody how to run anything.

The key question – why does the government employ so many consultants? – will be resolved by the head of the No 10 Delivery Unit, Ian Watmore. Not so long ago he was top man at... consultants Accenture!

NEWS

WITH the junior doctors' job application system scrapped as useless and unsafe, how is the Department of Health getting on with the biggest health information plan of them all – the electronic patient record at the heart of the NHS National Programme for IT?

Four years into the programme and with nothing delivered so far, parliament's health select committee recently took a belated look at it, only to find confusion reigning. Chairman Kevin Barron wanted to know why there are going to be two record systems – a detailed local one and a summary national one – when the idea had been a comprehensive record available anytime, anywhere.

Instead of giving the correct answer ("because the whole programme wasn't thought through before billions of pounds worth of contracts were handed out"), the man in charge, Richard Granger, once again chose to reinvent history. There "isn't a change of direction" he insisted, dredging up a reference to two types of record from a five-year old NHS document that pre-dated the inception of the National Programme and umpteen promises of a substantial national record.

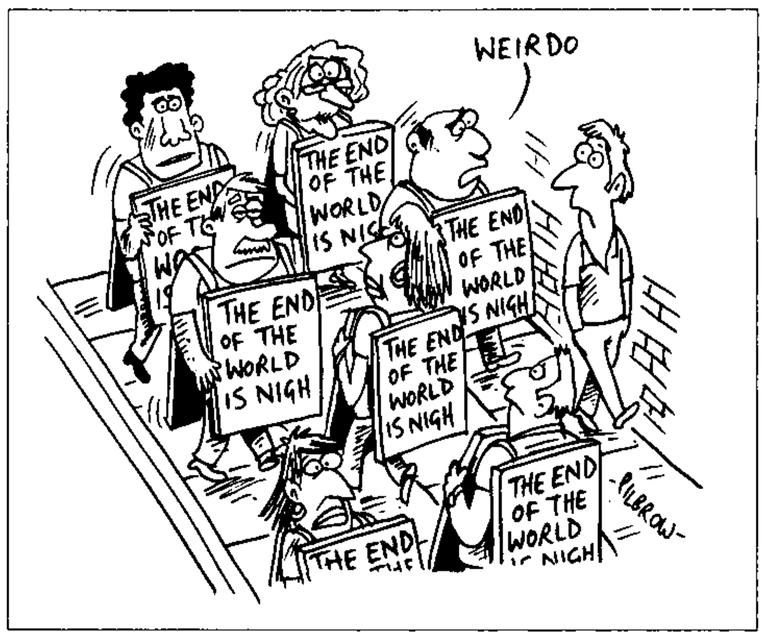
New Labour loyalist Barron let him off the hook and it was left for a later witness, the BMA's IT spokesman Dr Paul Cundy, to point out the obvious "volte face" on the main element of the government's £12.4bn plans for health IT.

Despite mounting delays and costs, Granger once again refused to entertain the independent review of the programme that almost everybody outside it is calling for.

SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

IS the £4.6m Parkside Community Health Centre in Beeston now Britain's most expensive store cupboard?

Built under the privately-financed Leeds LIFT scheme, 18 months after it opened half the consultation rooms are still empty – or being used for furniture storage. The building has room for four GP practices, but last week the *Yorkshire Post* revealed that only two have moved in.



However, nothing succeeds like failure in the NHS; so it's not altogether surprising to see that Leeds LIFT is on the shortlist for… the Public Private Finance Awards 2007, being dished out at the Grosvenor Hotel this week!

Street Of Shame

TREBLES all round at Wapping last week, as the Press Complaints Commission effectively cleared the *News of the Screws* of any misbehaviour in the phone-hacking case that resulted in the jailing of royal correspondent Clive Goodman.

The PCC reached its verdict on the strength of testimony from editor Clive Myler – even though he didn't even work at the *Screws* at the time. He insisted that no one at the paper knew Goodman was tapping phones, and paying private investigator Glenn "Trigger" Mulcaire to do the same. The PCC concluded there was "no evidence to challenge Mr Myler's assertion".

Mulcaire, a former Wimbledon footballer, received an annual retainer of £105,000 from the *Screws*, as well as more than £12,000 in cash from Goodman. Myler assured the PCC the retainer was for "legal and legitimate" work such as, er, "fact gathering", "suggesting strategies", "specialist crime advice" and "professional football knowledge". All most useful, no doubt: but was it really worth more than a hundred grand a year?

The man best qualified to answer that question is the editor who authorised the retainer, Andy Coulson. But the PCC decided not to interview him -- on the grounds that he was "no longer answerable to the PCC" since his resignation.

So it's official: no one at Wapping had the slightest inkling of what the royal correspondent and his well-paid sidekick were up to. But the sighs of relief may be premature. Since Goodman is now suing News International for unfair dismissal, Coulson may yet find himself in the witness box.

LAST month, *Daily Mail* editor Paul Dacre dispatched gossip column junior Petronella Wyatt to pen an attack on the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia and the manner in which her own, self-penned entry had been filled out with "alleged degeneracies of which I was supposedly responsible", in fact written by foes.

Dacre is taking no such chances himself. Noting that his own entry runs to a mere 240 words and has been granted "semi-protected" status due to "repeated violations which border upon libel", he has tasked a team from the *Mail*'s much-respected library with drafting something more impressive to put in its place.

JUST FANCY THAT 1

Private Eye
30 March 2007

Daily Telegraph
7 May 2007

***OK!* MAGAZINE won its appeal against glossy rival *Hello!* in the never-ending saga of the Catherine Zeta-Jones and Michael Douglas wedding pictures – a fact that didn't go entirely unreported in the national newspapers belonging to *OK!* owner Richard Desmond.**

So a party packed with B-list celebs on the ninth floor of his City HQ that day was bound to go off swimmingly. But not without one of the chairman's quirkier instructions. Nubile blondes on hand to greet the great and good friends of Dirty Des were ordered to welcome VIPs with the words "good afternoon" or "good evening". On no account, however, were they to utter that dread five-letter word: Hello!

"GUARDIAN PROFESSIONAL", an outfit set up by money men on the *Grauniad* to run lucrative executive conferences, is having a "climate change summit" next month to help public servants and businesses go greener. A key theme is Jonathon Porritt's observation that business must do more than "simply to wear the badge of corporate responsibility".

It's a bit puzzling, then, that the lead sponsor of the summit is the oil giant Shell. As the *Grauniad* recently reported, Shell has a reputation for "peddling shameful, absurd and misleading adverts about its green credentials". Now, having taken £100,000 from Shell, the paper has agreed to publish a climate supplement linking the shared goals of the paper with the oil company and has dedicated a page in the environment section of the *Guardian*'s website to Shell's PR nonsense. Visitors are informed that "Shell was one of the first energy companies to acknowledge the threat of climate change and to call for action", and is "pursuing numerous means to improve management of CO_2 emissions... Shell is also developing alternative energy sources."

This is what, in scientific circles, is known as "bollocks". As the *Guardian* has reported, Shell dedicates less than one per cent of its annual profits to renewable energy, and produces more carbon emissions from gas-flaring in Nigeria than everyone else in sub-Saharan Africa put together. Shell is the firm that polluted the Niger Delta, and in 2005 alone added 160,000 square kilometres of oil and gas exploration acreage to its portfolio – including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

No wonder a demo is planned. Red faces all round?

THE *Guardian* has given plenty of coverage to recent claims by top City fund manager Anthony Bolton that banks are lending too freely to private equity and disaster could be around the corner.

"He warned that the quality of lending by banks to private equity firms is deteriorating," it reported last week. "Much of the lending is, he said, 'covenant-lite', meaning if a firm goes bust, the bank will have little ability to reclaim the money lent. 'Covenant-lite, as far as I'm concerned, means there is no covenant at all'."

The story has particular resonance for the *Grauniad*. Earlier this year private-equity group Apax Partners raised £675m to take a 49.9 percent stake in the Auto Trader Group, in just such a "covenant-lite" deal. And who pocketed the cash while holding on to the remaining 50.1 percent of the company? The Guardian Media Group!

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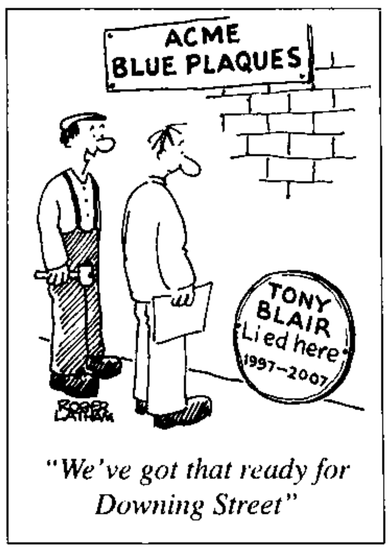
We are both very serious about reading the Guardian [say readers Katrin Eichhorn & Joanna Shepherd]. If on Saturday there was no food in the house, but we still had £1.40, then we would buy the paper.

The Grauniad

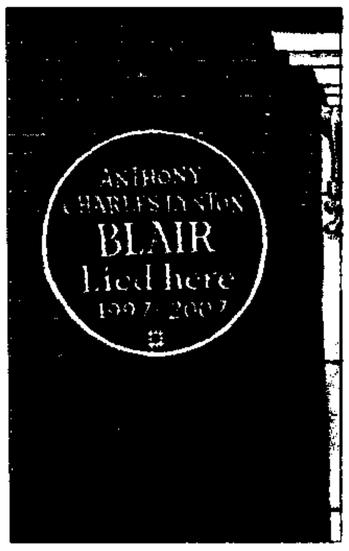
Submitted by Richard Cooper

JUST FANCY THAT 2



"We've got that ready for Downing Street"

Private Eye, 27 April



The Times, 2 May

JUST how far inside the closet was Lord Browne, the departed boss of BP? Almost at Narnia-depth, if former *Sunday Telegraph* editor Sarah Sands is to be believed.

"He was terribly private," she recalled in a valedictory column for the *Independent on Sunday*. "I remember having lunch with him at BP along with the former editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, Martin Newland. Newland was a former bodybuilder and absurdly handsome. When President George Bush met him he wanted to discuss Newland's gym regime before foreign affairs. Everybody commented on Newland's looks, except Browne."

So that settles it. He can't be gay at all.

VICKI-MARIE Cossar, features assistant on Metro, recently issued a heartfelt green plea to PR companies via the industry website Sourcewire.

"Please consider the environment and stop sending *Metro* paper press releases through the post and just send emails with any information. Any paper releases will not be looked at."

All most admirable – and in no way compromised by the fact that the Associated Newspapers freesheet distributes 1,125,633 copies on the streets of 13 of the UK's major cities every morning. Westminster council in central London recently estimated that a quarter of all the waste it collects – three to four tonnes per day – consists of… free newspapers!

LORD GNOME has received a curious letter from Melanie Phillips about an item in Eye 1183.

"Street of Shame upbraids me for not disclosing that Dave Gaubatz, about whom I wrote in the *Spectator*, has an organisation called SANE and posted on its website a passage which is open to ridicule," writes Mel P, aka Very Scary Spice. "Only one problem – he doesn't run the organisation, it's not his website and he didn't write the passage. Otherwise, spot on!"

There are only one or two problems with Mel's denial. We never said that Gaubatz personally wrote an anonymous statement for SANE (the Society of Americans for National Existence) which defined National Existence as "a political order experienced by men of the nation as a Rise to Being. Its opposite is a replacement of political order experienced by men, women, children and slaves as a Fall from Being. This redirection in the experience of the Terms of Being (Self, Society, God and World) results in the collapse of Self into Society and all into World."

But he presumably endorses the mission statement, given that he is one of the three executives who do indeed run SANE: he rejoices in the title "Director of Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism Studies" and is the main contributor to its website, www.saneworks.us. (Since the *Eye* piece appeared, however, the guff about Falls from Being has disappeared from the site. Perhaps even they found it "open to ridicule".)

Otherwise, spot on!

TRIAL BY FLEET STREET

SENIOR managers at the *Sunday Mirror*, perhaps buoyed by their triumph last December when supermarket worker Tom Stephens was arrested on suspicion of the murder of five prostitutes in Ipswich after pouring his heart out to the paper (before being released three days later when someone entirely different was charged), advised reporter Lori Campbell to go to both Portuguese and Leicestershire police with her suspicions about Robert Murat.

Mr Murat had been offering translation services to those involved with the investigation into the disappearance of British toddler Madeleine McCann in Praia da Luz. "He was acting very strangely. I found him to be creepy," Campbell told police. "Given the unimaginable horrors which Madeleine's parents were enduring, it seemed the very least I should do."

As the *Eye* went to press, the police still insisted there was not enough evidence to charge Mr Murat with anything – despite the best efforts of British newspapers…

Contradictory evidence

" 'Chillingly, Murat said: 'I know how it feels to Madeleine's parents because I have a daughter aged three and a half',"

– news report, Express, 15 May

"As a parent of a four-year-old little girl it breaks my heart to imagine the anguish that the parents must be going through."

– "Letter of the Day", Express, 15 May

"Murat was reluctant to be filmed."

– Sun, 15 May, page 4, paragraph 11

"He told his story and wandered around the scene in front of TV cameras."

– Sun, 15 May, page 4, paragraph 14

"For the last few days Mr Murat has helped out the media. He has a very friendly relationship with police."

– Daily Mail, 15 May

"He had continually haunted the crime scene."

– Daily Mail, 17 May

"Police swooped on Moscow-born Malinka, 22, after discovering emails from him on Murat's laptop computer."

– Mirror, 17 May

"Mr Malinka confirmed that he worked for Mr Murat earlier this year to create a website for his estate agency. The Russian citizen is believed to have volunteered to help police."

– Times, 17 May

THE HUNT FOR MADELEINE: RUSSIAN 'PERVERT' QUIZZED

– Headline on Mirror website, 17 May, morning.

THE HUNT FOR MADELEINE: RUSSIAN QUIZZED

– Headline on Mirror website, 17 May, afternoon

"MADELEINE: THE EVIDENCE

Casa Liliana – Two-storey white-painted villa 150 yards from McCann apartment. Sniffer dogs go 'mental' on entering. Search of villa, roof, grounds, garage, a small shed beneath the pool where chemicals appeared to be stored, and the Murats' green van and a Hyundai. Swimming pool drained, internal walls torn down, garden cesspit checked. Three video cassettes and communications equipment seized. Shredded paper found at Casa Liliana could not be reassembled. Results of tests for DNA and fibres found at the Murat villa awaited."

– Mirror, 19 May

"Police investigating the disappearance of Madeleine McCann have found no 'material proof' from the villa of their prime suspect, the Briton Robert Murat. The results of DNA tests at the villa Mr Murat shares with his mother, 160 yards from the McCanns' apartment, are still awaited, but initial forensic analysis has turned up nothing and there is no evidence of a kidnap."

– Independent, 19 May

Suspicious behaviour

"Madeleine McCann abduction suspect Robert Murat astonished pals by leaping on children's bouncy castles at parties, his ex-boss claimed yesterday. Murat, 33 – quizzed by Portuguese cops over Maddie, four – couldn't resist playing on the inflatable toys at work bashes. Former boss Paul Titcombe said: 'Instead of mingling, he'd go straight to the bouncy castle and jump around… It seemed like a fixation'."

– Sun, 16 May

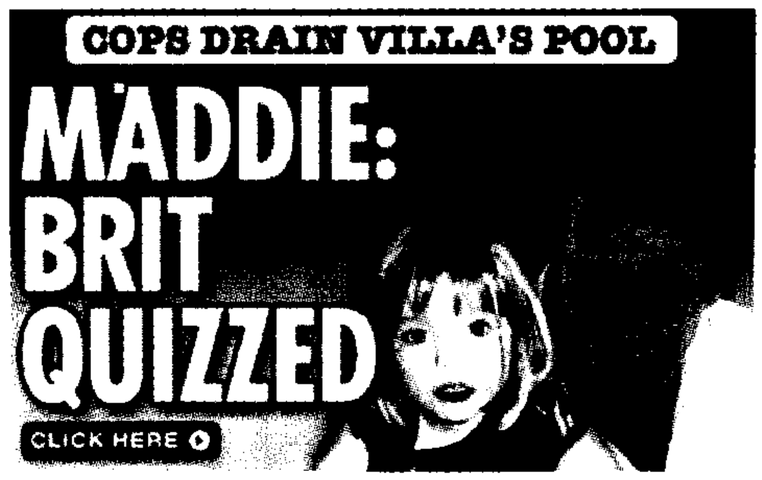
"Mr Murat phoned the Auto Rent III office opposite the church in Praia da Luz to order a car. Sales assistant Maria Rocio said: 'There was something about his voice when he asked for the car. He was saying, I need to have the car quickly. His voice was very impatient. When I said he could not have it straight away he said, Oh, maybe I need to try somewhere else. I could tell from his voice that he needed it in a hurry'."

– Daily Mail, 18 May

"Police were also last night examining the possibility that Murat had access to dozens of unoccupied properties in the surrounding area in his role as local estate agent."

– Daily Star, 19 May

Deceptive appearances



– Graphic from Sun website, 15 May

"MADDY SUSPECT BEHAVED JUST LIKE HUNTLEY"

– front page headline of Daily Express, 16 May, referring to Ian Huntley's conversations to reporters in Soham, rather than the fact he murdered two children

"SEX SECRETS OF MADDY SUSPECT… MADDY MAN SHARES GIRL WITH HUBBY"

– Headlines in Daily Star reporting fact that Robert Murat is in relationship with 34-year-old woman, 16 May

And moral indignation…

"The McCanns… are desperate to keep Madeleine on the front pages because they think it may lead to a sighting. Sometimes their efforts can create uncomfortable images. Photographs appeared yesterday of Mrs McCann jogging, wearing black shorts and crop top, midriff on show. While her trips to church seemed right, the sight of her devoting time to keep fit may have seemed disquieting."

– The Telegraph, which nevertheless printed the pictures in question in a double-page spread, 18 May

DEPUTY DOGS

SO MUCH for Peter Hain's claim that Labour's deputy leader should be like an "umbilical cord", reconnecting the leadership with grassroots party members and the unions. Rootle around in Hain's belly button and you find the usual mob of millionaires and lobbyists.

The largest donation so far to the Hain for Deputy Leader campaign is £15,000 from **Bill Bottriel**, an IT recruitment millionaire. Hain also got £10,000 from **Chris Campbell**, a lifelong Conservative supporter until Labour was elected in 1997.

The Conservatives had brought Campbell in from Debenham's to help privatise British Rail, where he earned £147,000 a year as vice-chairman from 1994 to 1997 – during privatisation and the setting up of the "Rosco" rolling stock firms so criticised by Gordon Brown.

Hain also got £5,000 from **Terry Johnsey**, a millionaire property developer and the 41st richest man in Wales. Hain is using some of the millionaire's money to pay for a lobbyist, **Steve Moore** of Morgan Allen Moore, to run his campaign. Moore is more used to representing big firms like Coca Cola, Bechtel or Merck Sharpe and Dohme than wannabe Labour deputy leaders out to promote a "red green" eco-socialist agenda.

The more right-wing candidate, **Alan Johnson**, added some "old Labour" touches to his election campaign, emphasising that he was "someone whose background, foreground, mainland and hinterland are working class". But his supporters? Along with money from **Lord Sainsbury**, Johnson has financial backing from property developers, including £2,500 from **DMQA Holdings,** a developer wanting to reopen the Greyhound Racing Stadium in Hull, and another £2,500 from **Jack Brignall's** firm, the Wykeland Group. Brignall, another developer, is the 723rd richest man in Britain, with an estimated £50m fortune. Working class indeed.

Hilary Benn meanwhile is promising he will be a deputy leader who "ensures that the voice of the members and affiliated unions is heard in government" and represents the "voices of the grassroots". So why is he so dependent on property developers and bankers? He is funded with £10,000 from **Kevin McGrath** of development firm REITS Asset Management. McGrath, *Eye* readers will recall, has given more than £100,000 to the party since 2005. This may be because his business uses a tax break called Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITS) that Gordon Brown created for property developers.

Benn is also campaigning with £5,000 from **Gilad Hayeem**, chief executive of a multi billion pound hedge fund called Marble Asset Management. So not very "grassroots Labour" at all.

● In his current job at the Department for International Development, Hilary Benn has overseen amazing goings on at ACTIS, the private equity fund manager set up three years ago by DfID to manage funds dedicated to poorer countries *but now* vastly enriching its owner-managers (*Eye* 1183). It has acquired a South African financial services group called Alexander Forbes, which is just emerging from financial scandal having been caught ripping off pension funds. Benn insisted that Actis would "follow responsible business principles". Alas, Forbes's describes its UK business as "innovative fiscal solutions", aka tax-dodging, and advises British companies on wiping out their tax bills by stuffing cash into Channel Island trusts while directors extract the money with "tax-free cash withdrawals". Is that what Benn meant by "responsible"?

CALLED TO ORDURE

SIR ALISTAIR Graham, about to turn 65, has just finished his three-year stint as London's "sleazebuster", or chairman of the Committee on Standards in Public Life as we are meant to call him, and was invited to make a valedictory appearance in front of a committee of MPs.

It soon became clear, however, why this burly, plain-talking Geordie was not offered a second term. He was far too good at the job first time round.

We learned, among other things, that Sir Alistair, who regularly took pops at badly behaved politicians, never got to meet his direct boss, the Prime Minister. He met Gordon Brown four times and had face-to-faces with many other elected figures. But Tony Blair, the man who promised to hose sleaze from the pavements of Westminster? Sir Alistair was not once invited into Tony's Downing Street den. Instead he had to deal with the Cabinet Secretary.

"I would have welcomed the chance to have a discussion," Sir Alistair admitted to the Public Administration Committee (PAC) with just a hint of a smile. "It would obviously have been helpful."

The committee is one of the better outfits at the Commons. It generally has a mind of its own and tries to examine the muddier culverts of government where corruption and patronage collect like old twigs. So it was maybe only in the spirit of contrary cross-examination that the committee's chairman, Tony Wright (Lab, Cannock Chase), put it to Sir Alistair that in truth British public life was pretty darn squeaky clean.

"Well," said Sir Alistair, slowly lifting his eyebrows, "we still haven't completed a long-running police investigation into loans for peerages. I dunno if that's a hallmark of the cleanest system in the world." Wright blinked, wrinkled his nose and retreated.

Sir Alistair also noted the way the BAE Systems slush fund investigation was killed by ministerial intervention. "There's a danger we've prided ourselves for too long on having a clean system," he said, "but the reputation doesn't look quite so good." He said he was "personally affronted" by Downing Street's interference in the BAE case because he had often been sent abroad to lecture foreigners on Britain's esteemed anti-corruption measures. "We really our damaging our international position," he said.

Wright accused Sir Alistair of having said some "pretty disobliging things about the Prime Minister". Rather than dodge this accusation, Sir Alistair nodded calmly. He argued that the loans-for-peerages scandal fully justified his worries. Later, when Wright seemed to be trying to mock Sir Alistair's lack of access to the PM, Sir Alistair just made another weary "that's the way the world turns" gesture.

Charles Walker (Con, Broxbourne), new to the committee, made a fool of himself by asking Sir Alistair about his own political background. Had the twerpish Walker not bothered to gen up on the witness's biography? Most serious people at Westminster know that Sir Alistair spent many years in the trade unions, that he ran the Civil and Public Services Association and once stood as a Labour parliamentary candidate. If Walker was hoping to imply that the retiring sleazebuster's Labour party links made him a partisan regulator, he was soon put in his place.

Gordon Prentice (Lab, Pendle), more in the spirit of cheerful provocation than antagonism, wondered if Downing Street had viewed Sir Alistair as "a kind of tea boy" who could be ignored. After all, said Prentice, "you called for a Civil Service Act".

Sir Alistair, wonderfully unruffled, remarked: "So did you."

Mr Prentice: "Oh yes. But I'm asking the questions."

Sir Alistair: "Isn't that what public life is about? Arguing for changes?" Prentice gave a sorrowful sigh of agreement.

MPs raised the government's refusal to punish John Prescott after the Tracey Temple scandal. Was this not another poke (if we can use that word)in the eye for the Standards Commissioner? Ditto Tessa Jowell's various tribulations. Sir Alistair deftly said that he "thought we had made progress" when the matter was referred to Sir John Bourn, Comptroller General. And there he let the matter hang in the air.

Everyone in the room understood what he was saying, or rather not saying. Thanks to the *Eye*'s recent investigations into Bourn's freeloading, the Comptroller General is no longer seen as entirely spotless. Can we really be surprised such a flawed figure failed to denounce Shagger Prescott and Jowell's Italian connections?

Sir Alistair finally took a swipe at the Electoral Commission, that plump quango which has done little to prevent Labour voting scandals. It was noted that some 9 percent of ballots in the recent Scottish elections were ruled to have been spoilt. Sir Alistair said that if that had happened in England, "there would be a scandal". Why had there not been such an outcry about the Scottish results? No wonder Sir Alistair wasn't offered a second term.

'Gavel Basher'

THE EXPERT VIEW

"All the money today has been for Hilary Benn to win the Deputy Leader job and we have been forced to slash her odds dramatically."

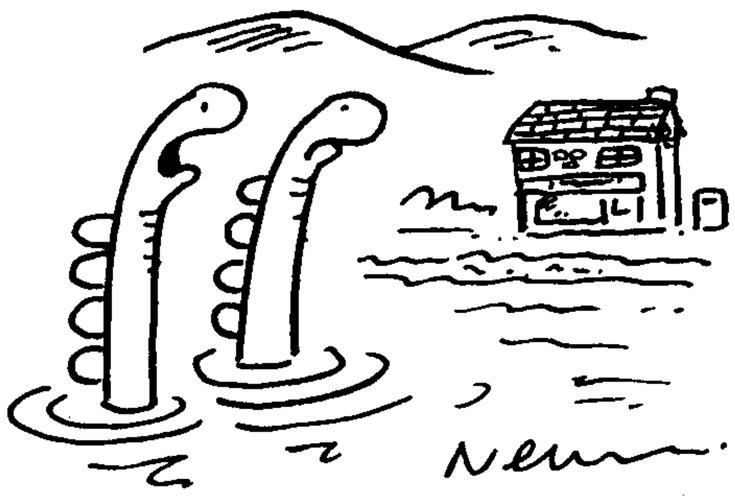
– Coral Bookmakers, 16 May

JUST FANCY THAT

DAVID CAMERON's new look, modern, with-it, inclusive Tories put up his close aide and Parliamentary Private Secretary Desmond Swayne for *Newsnight* on the day that General Sir Richard Dannatt announced he would not, after all, send Prince Harry to Iraq with his troops.

With impeccable taste, the trusted henchman told viewers that the MoD's decision over whether to send Harry to Iraq had been "off and on more times than a bride's nightie".

Is this quite the man to bring Cameron closer to the zeitgeist?



"Great Scot – it's the Loch Ness post office"

LEFT IN THE LURCH

WHAT'S happened to the left-wing revolt? You must remember it. Tony Blair provoked hundreds of thousands to embrace the left. Yet now, with anger about war greater than in 2003, the left of the Labour Party is so feeble it can't put up a candidate to run against Brown.

After months of squabbles about whether Michael Meacher or John McDonnell should be the man, it ended up failing to find enough MPs to back the nomination of either. Outside Westminster, the Stop the War coalition is faring no better. A movement that once marshalled great demonstrations through the streets of London has shrivelled into an irrelevance.

Perhaps the following facts can help solve the puzzle.

Michael Meacher plays the housing market with a buy-to-let property business which is a strange way for a prolier-than-thou socialist to make a living… but stranger still is his transformation into a 9/11 conspiracy nut.

In an article for the *Guardian*, Meacher implied that the neo-cons allowed al Qaeda to provide them with a pretext for war and asked: "Could US air security operations have been deliberately stood down on September 11?"

An intelligent leftist should be able to oppose Bush without resorting to this sort of nonsense. Meacher couldn't, and the best thing to say about him is that John McDonnell can't abide him.

McDonnell is more interested in Irish Republican than Islamist violence. In 2003 he declared: "It's about time we started honouring those people involved in the armed struggle. It was the bombs and bullets and sacrifice made by the likes of Bobby Sands that brought Britain to the negotiating table."

As with Meacher, anyone new to left-wing politics may have wondered why they had to honour the bombs and bullets of the IRA.

Similar questions afflicted many who joined the anti-war protests and found themselves led by an unholy alliance of the white far left, in the guise of the Socialist Workers Party, and the Islamist far Right. Since 2003, demonstrations have gone from hundreds of thousands to tens of thousands to a few thousand. The tipping point for everyone excepted the diehards was the protest against the war between Hezbollah and Israel, in which the SWP persuaded gormless leftists to march under the banner "We are all Hezbollah". This is the organisation whose leader, Hasan Nasrallah, famously advised the West: 'We don't want anything from you. We just want to eliminate you'."

It is a dismal comment on the state of left-wing politics that one national figure to emerge from the anti-war ferment was George Galloway, who spends his days on a Cook's tour of the world's dictators. He saluted Saddam Hussein, Bashar al-Assad and Fidel Castro, while expressing his regret for the passing of the Soviet Union, singing the praises of Hasan Nasrallah and taking the odd break to crawl to Rula Lenska in the *Big Brother* House.

It wouldn't take Sherlock Holmes to solve the mystery of the vanishing left. Blair pushed millions leftwards, but they took one look at their new leaders and ran away as fast as their legs would carry them.

'Ratbiter'

WIKIPEDIA WHISPERS

IT'S hard to keep up with the helter-skelter career of Giovanni di Stefano, the self-styled lawyer who claims to have represented Saddam Hussein, Slobodan Milosevic, Ian Brady and Kenneth Noye.

The past fortnight has seen him busier than ever: issuing statements on behalf of his chum "Dutchy" Holland, who is in Belmarsh awaiting trial on abduction and firearms charges; complaining about political interference in the Eurovision song contest; revealing that Saddam was a fan of Dundee FC, where di Stefano was once a director; threatening legal action against Ashworth top-security hospital for refusing to let Ian Brady keep a book about the Moors Murders; and, er, releasing a CD by "Italian singer Just Carmen" which includes a cover-version of "Everyone's Gone to the Moon" by kind permission of di Stefano's mate Jonathan King, the convicted sex-offender.

Until recently, anyone wanting a guide to his exotic career could find an extensive article in Wikipedia, which mentioned everything from his fraud conviction in 1986 (when a judge branded him "one of nature's swindlers, without scruples or conscience") through his failed attempts to buy football clubs and the recurring doubts about whether he's really a lawyer at all. ("As far as we're concerned," the Law Society has said, "he has no legal qualifications whatsoever.")

Di Stefano didn't like this one little bit. Two years ago he started editing out anything he found embarrassing, sometimes twice a day, to the point where the page was "locked" for several months to prevent further tampering. When asked to stop deleting the contents he threatened Wikipedia contributors with legal action.

On 24 April this year, without warning, Wikipedia founder and director Jimmy "Jimbo" Wales personally deleted the entire page. Soon afterwards a new, cleaned-up version of the di Stefano entry was created – minus all the awkward facts.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

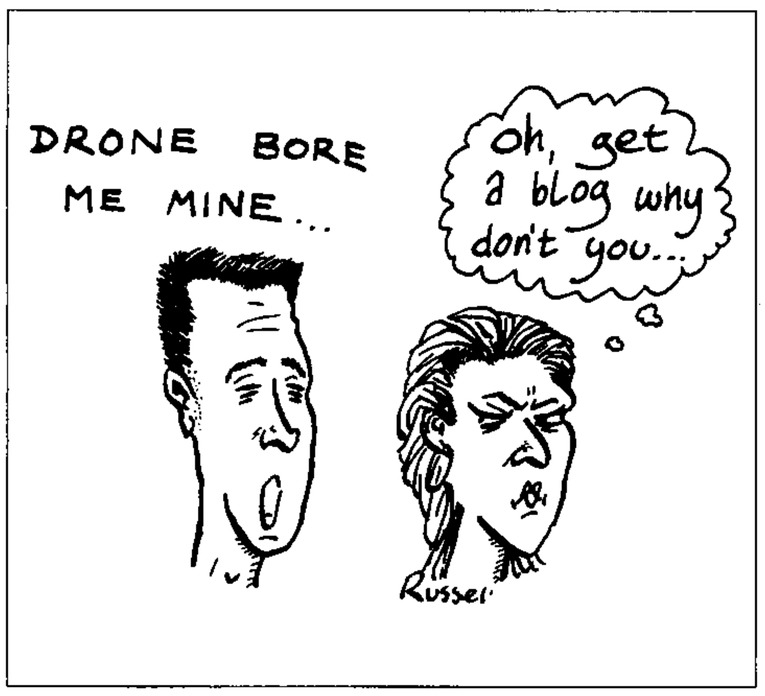
BRUSSELS awaits Gordon Brown's premiership without enthusiasm. Whereas Tony Blair is known in the capital of Europe for promising much but delivering little, the PM-in-waiting is considered boorish and disdainful.

Brown has shown scant interest in building relationships with his counterparts; he rarely attends meetings of finance ministers, preferring to send Treasury Secretary Ed Balls. And when he does have a Europe idea, he briefs selected hacks in London, leaving other capitals to find out from the news wires.

EU-phemisms
WE HAVE REACHED A DEMOCRATIC SOLUTION ON THE E.U. CONSTITUTION
E.U. SUMMIT
RGJ
We've voted to ignore the people's opinions

Some of Brown's ideas have left Brussels wondering if he is being mischievous, provocative or merely ignorant. Last year, he proposed an independent European competition panel. Bewildered officials pointed out that, er, the European Commission is already an independent competition authority, and to remove this would cut away one of its main powers.

More recently, Balls made a speech saying EU spending, especially on agriculture and economic development for the less well-off member states, should not necessarily come from the EU budget. Such a renationalisation of EU funds would curtail the commission's role and is hardly likely to gain support from the more solidarity-minded states. But for the UK there would be at least one advantage: avoiding those embarrassing (and growing) fines from Brussels for monumental farm payment management cock-ups (*Eyes passim*).



MAKING A MEALE OF IT

HAVING failed to become Mansfield's elected mayor, local Labour MP Alan Meale may also be coming unstuck in his attempt to sue two football fans who made allegedly libellous comments about him on a supporters' website (*Eye* 1176).

The Stags supporters' site removed the "defamatory" remarks voluntarily, but Meale still took it to court to discover the identities of the individuals who had posted them. As only a name and email address were needed to register on the Mansfield Town FC forum, these were the only details released.

Mansfield Town season ticket holder Mark Wells says he was shocked to receive a letter threatening court action and denies ever having posted defamatory material on the website – or being "Stagsfan", the pseudonym of the person responsible for the offending material.

In fact there are five Mark Wellses on the Mansfield electoral roll and more than one person of that name in the supporters' association (users of the website include football fans worldwide). Meale's lawyers have denied that they got the address from the list of season ticket holders, but won't say how they did get it.

Meale's close involvement in the scandal-rocked football club may well have cost him votes in his attempt to unseat independent mayor Tony Egginton this month.

HIGH PRINCIPALS

HIGHER education minister Bill Rammell dug the first spade of earth on Anglia Ruskin University's £15m Chelmsford campus rebuild in March, while Professor Michael Thorne, the vice-chancellor, described plans for a new £10m building in Peterborough, plus further ambitious schemes in King's Lynn, Harlow, Thurrock and, er, Belize (Anglia Ruskin's chancellor is Michael Ashcroft).

But a month later, the future was not looking so rosy when Anglia Ruskin announced the redundancies of 90 academic staff. After the summer, the Essex-based university will stop teaching modern languages, politics, modern history and art history to degree level in an attempt to stop the faculty of arts, law and social sciences losing £2m a year.

In April the university also announced that full-time student numbers were down by 6 percent this year. The branch opening in Belize may have to be put on hold…

THE University of the West of England is the latest academic institution to agree a contract with private sector training company, Carter and Carter (see last *Eye*).

But why did UWE's academic board only give the project its "cautious approval"? It wasn't just the "perceived increased privatisation of education" that had board members worried – there was a "possible conflict of interest" too.

That's because the decision to "enter into a work-based learning collaboration" followed discussions between UWE (whose vice-chancellor is Sir Howard Newby), Carter and Carter (whose non-executive directors include Sir Howard Newby) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (whose former head is, er, Sir Howard Newby).

Life for Sir Howard at UWE just gets cosier and cosier. His assistant vice-chancellor is none other than his wife, Sheila Newby.

TV

Panorama (BBC1)
Panorama Exposed (Freedom Television)

SINCE the DVD market took off, it has been common for a making-of doc to be made alongside each documentary. The unfortunate difference with the *Panorama* investigation of the Church of Scientology is that the parallel documentary was made by the Scientologists themselves and has been posted on the internet and sent out to media correspondents under the title *Panorama Exposed*.

But you don't need to be an investigative reporter to see where *Panorama* started to go wrong. If it's really necessary, after the hundreds of tabloid newspaper reporters who have done it, to have yet another pop at the holders of Tom Cruise's and John Travolta's souls, then you send in your most forensic and charming reporter, someone who could leave the L Ron Hubbard gang with no possible complaint that they were being treated differently from anyone else and yet would have exposed them through cool reporting.

But the editor of *Panorama* chose to send in John "Foghorn" Sweeney, a reporter so notoriously excitable and prone to over-involvement with a story that he can scarcely buy a coffee from the BBC trolley without tearfully exhorting the queue to march and picket Starbucks. Really, once Sweeney's name was felt-tipped on the shiny whiteboard beside this story, they should have been reserving the slot on My Space for the moment when he spectacularly lost it.

But they were probably thinking that, with the BBC in control of the edit, the most embarrassing bits could be left in the cutting-room. The lesson, though, of the *Panorama* fiasco is that, with the easy availability of the tools for making and distributing media, people in television now have to conduct themselves as if they were on television.

Yet, even so, for a project intended to reveal mainstream television's ethical abuses, the 30-minute *Panorama Exposed* DVD is not itself exactly a handbook on broadcasting morality. For a start, whereas we know, for good or ill, that the *Panorama* on the Scientologists was produced by the BBC, *Panorama Exposed* goes to some lengths to disguise the fact that it is the Scientologists on *Panorama*, only ever being credited to an organisation called Freedom Television, which has an address remarkably close to Scientology HQ in Britain.

And, while it's intriguing to see so much footage of Sweeney and his crew at work, a documentary dedicated to establishing new standards of accuracy and openness in television might usefully have revealed how it came to amass all of this surveillance coverage. In the same way, the apparently innocent line of commentary – "we went to see Sweeney at his hotel" – raises the fascinating question of how precisely the Scientologists discovered his accommodation, as the BBC team insists that it never passed this information on. Perhaps it was just lucky ringing around; but the failure to explain feels like a serious hole in a show aiming to be holier than thou.

Oh, and the moment in which the BBC is accused of either provoking or itself making terrorist threats against the Scientologists confirms exactly why so many investigative hacks on the make are so keen to go after this lot, knowing that they will get not only a colourful story but lots of personal publicity as well.

Yet, despite being an exercise in paranoid and sanctimonious control-freakery, the Scientology doc does land a few blows, which are likely to lead to changes in film-making practice at the BBC. Ruthlessly exposed are the small but significant abuses which can come from knowing that you are in total control of the edit. Sweeney is seen chatting conspiratorially with witnesses supportive of his film's thesis and apparently reshooting several times sequences which were presented in the film as observational actuality.

The Cruisers and Travoltings also score points for a sequence in which their crew marches into the headquarters of the BBC and the Church of England and demand an immediate interview with the head of the organisation: a quid pro quo for a sequence in Sweeney's piece. Though motivated by the Scientologists' habitual paranoia about the media, such moments were a serious critique of the tabloid conventions which are leaking unchallenged into TV. The two DVDs side by side should be added rapidly to the syllabuses of media studies courses.

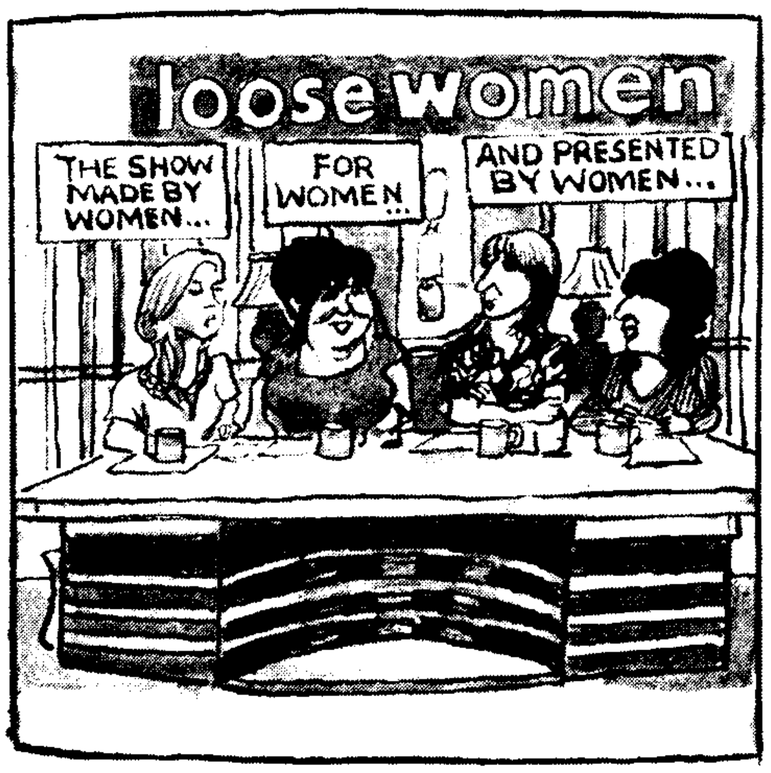
Strictly, the Scientologists are correct that several BBC regulations – including those outlawing "restaging" and calling for sensitivity and even-handedness towards religious faith – have been broken.

The fault, though, is not predominantly with *Panorama* but with those BBC rules. Regulations which draw no distinction between the Church of England and the Scientologists, and which draw no distinction between making a shot look better and completely inventing a scenario.

The fact is that there are some groups with such a controversial record – the BNP, Scientology - that they can and should not be treated with even-handedness and, by pretending otherwise, the BBC invites cheap legal actions and complaints to regulators. There should also be no special protection for religions when, to leave the Cruisers out of it for a moment, the Catholic and Anglican churches are faced with scandals involving sexual abuse by clergy.

But the trouble began with the overdone choice of subject-matter and assignment of an over-wrought reporter. Sweeney's next assignment should be a series called *In The China Shop*. First investigation: what IS the religion of Benedict XVI?

'Remote Controller'



MEDIA NEWS

AS WELL as hiring an aircraft and helicopter, for the last two weeks BBC News has sent three correspondents, three reporters and their crews to Portugal to cover the disappearance of Madeleine McCann, along with four other reporters who have been sent to various parts of the UK where McCann family members had been located. In addition, Huw Edwards was finally sent to anchor the Six O'Clock News live from outside the resort.

This is more than were sent to the Lebanon to cover the last Israeli invasion, despite the fact that in this case there was virtually nothing to report.

The reason for the saturation coverage is to be found in the ratings. The BBC collects "overnight audience reaction" data for individual news stories from every broadcast, dividing the figures into three categories: "Particularly Stood Out", "Would Like to Know More" and "Did Not Interest".

Far and away the most popular news story for ten days in a row was the "Latest on search for 3 year old Madeleine", averaging between 40 percent and 50 percent approval. Despite being a public service broadcaster, BBC News editors decided to follow the ratings rather than the story.

GOING LIVE

WHEN Sky News went live to Praia de Luz for the latest from anchor Jeremy Thompson on the suspect Robert Murat, Thompson was joined on screen by the publisher of the local newspaper.

"Sheena, you knew the Murat family quite well," he began confidently.

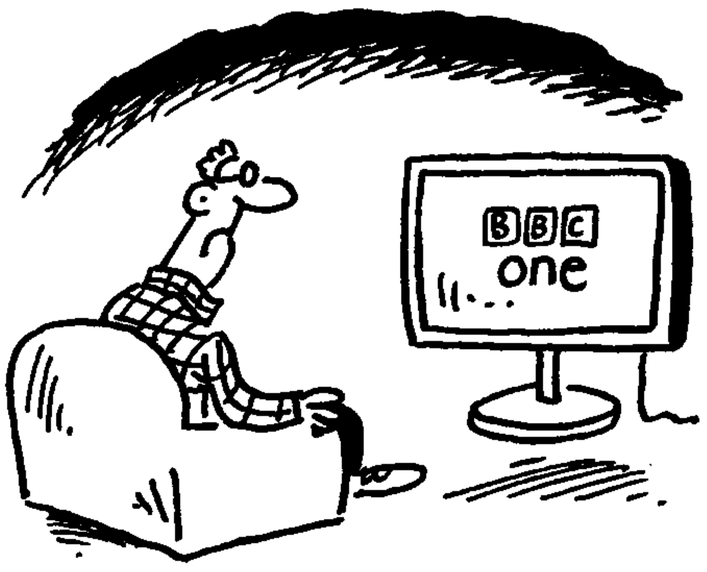
"Well I didn't know them quite well at all, but I knew of them," came her reply.

YET more embarrassment for GMTV, as the channel is pilloried for "duping viewers" again.

This time the culprit was presenter Ben Shepherd, who introduced a story about refuse collections by posing beside a rat-infested bin outside the studios – without revealing that the vermin had been put there shortly beforehand by GMTV gofers. This was despite an intensive brief from a researcher and frequent reminders from his production team.

Shepherd – known as "himbo" because of his boyish looks and lack of brain power – has good qualifications as a GMTV presenter: he used to be a ballet dancer but gave up because it was "too much like hard work". Hacks believe the decision by director of programmes Peter McHugh to hire a dancer rather than an experienced reporter was a calculated insult to show them how dispensable they are.

Though he tried to laugh off the rat affair, McHugh has asked technical support to investigate email records in the hope of finding who passed the story to the *Daily Mail*. But then he has every reason to be a bit edgy. Someone will have to become a sacrificial offering to atone for the phone-quiz scandal which cost viewers about £40m. His boss, managing director Paul Corley, is determined it won't be him. Editor Martin Frizzell is safe, as he's married to GMTV presenter Fiona Phillips and she might walk out. So it'll have to be McHugh.



"Now on BBC1, Victoria Wood on Empire – while over on BBC2 Niall Ferguson sings some whimsical songs"

AS READERS of the *Eye* and *Daily Express* can hardly help but be aware, the latter's proprietor Richard Desmond donated £2.5m to Moorfields Hospital's new Children's Eye Centre. How he must be kicking himself after discovering that the true cure for blindness was not only considerably cheaper, but to be found under his nose all the time!

Adverts on Deal TV, a satellite and cable channel owned by Desmond's Northern and Shell group, recently carried repeated testimonies to the efficacy of the Doctor Paul Lewis Miracle Olive Oil Soap, including one man who was "totally blind to the point that his eyes were white when you took the sunglasses off" but as a result of "washing with the soap is going to get better and better and better until he can see totally."

Not only that, but as presenter Harry McCain gushed: "We get so many calls about this soap saying what did you put in that soap? The amount of testimony we've been getting of people who've been healed from cancer, Aids I mean Aids! I mean doctors don't have a cure for Aids or cancer and the amount of testimony we are getting."

The Advertising Standards Authority has ruled that the channel breached no fewer than 11 clauses of its code of practice and has banned any more plugs for the miracle soap. Deal TV surrendered its licence to Ofcom in April, so Desmond will now have to rely on his more respectable TV channels like Red Hot All Girl to subsidise his charitable giving.

GABBY LOGAN, the "face" of BBC Sport on the new Monday-night magazine programme, *Inside Sport*, has more than one face.

The frontwoman, expensively hired from ITV before the BBC catastrophically lost the rights to England football matches, has been simultaneously fronting up for interviews as the face of BT Broadband's new video phone service, the sort of lucrative commercial arrangement normally denied to BBC employees.

JOHN SWEENEY was not surprisingly given a bollocking by *Panorama* executives after his on-screen outburst during his Scientology "investigation", but were there extenuating circumstances?

In the interests of balance, the *Eye* should point out that Sweeney's team had asked for an hour of airtime instead of the half hour slot they were given; and with only 30 minutes available, they were encouraged to "do a *Watchdog*" and play the whole thing up.

Interviews with former Scientologists who knew they were being followed by the Hubbardistas were all conducted in public places, rather than in the safety of the BBC's own studios in Los Angeles, because the crew wanted them to be intercepted.

Moreover, Sweeney was briefed to goad the Hubbardistas, calling Scientology "a cult" – by the very same producers who administered his "interview without coffee" when he got back.

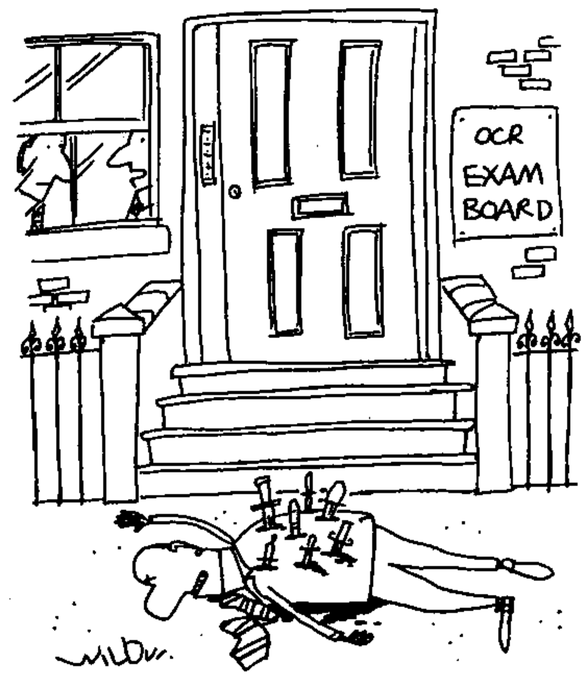
EDUCASHUN NEWZ

***EUGE!* The ancient history A level has been saved.**

The OCR exam board, which planned to scrap it (*Eye* 1183), has agreed to work with the Joint Association of Classical Teachers to devise a "qualification that will be highly valued by students".

The ancient history saga raises questions about the accountability of exam boards for minority subjects, however, as OCR only caved in after two parliamentary debates during which schools minister Lord Adonis said he was "not content" with the move, and a toga wearing protest by sixth-formers (accompanied by Boris the Menace).

While OCR still claims to have consulted widely, the outcry suggests it should listen more closely to what teaching organisations and subject specialists have to say.



"He's the one who suggested scrapping the Ancient History A level"

DUMB BRITAIN

Century FM £5000 quiz

Presenter: Question one for ten pounds. The south of England is nearer the equator than the north of England. True or false?

Caller: Eeh that's a tricky one!

Presenter: The south of England is nearer the equator than the north of England. True or false?

Caller: I'll go false.

Heart FM breakfast show

Jamie Theakston: How many days are left from today until the end of this year?

Contestant: How long do I have to work it out?

Theakston: Five more seconds.

Contestant: Er… 700?

Steve Wright's Big Quiz, Radio 2

Wright: On what part of the body is a lobotomy performed?

Contestant: The bottom.

"THE libel laws are an abomination. They favour rich, litigious bullies at the expense of freedom of expression." Who could possibly argue with that?

Well, childcare "expert" Gina Ford could, for one. Ms Ford, who recently dropped a libel claim against the website Mumsnet after receiving an apology and a contribution towards her legal fees, took exception to the intro of a comment piece by hackette Heather Brooke which appeared in *The Times* on 14 May. Brooke used the Mumsnet case as a peg for an article in which she argued that, in general, England's libel laws overwhelmingly favour the rich and powerful and are "heavily weighted against freedom of expression". A piece of fair comment, one might think, and an opinion which is shared by most journalists and many lawyers.

No sooner had *The Times* hit the streets, however, than Ford's lawyers threatened legal action. The Thunderer's response was swift. It immediately removed Brooke's piece from its own and other websites in order to avoid any further offence to the eminently reasonable author!

MODESTY BLAISE

"I've always had a thought maybe that I might have been Shakespeare in another life. I don't really believe that 100%, and I don't really care about Shakespeare, I've never been into Shakespeare, but then people are constantly bringing up all of these qualities in my work that mirror Shakespeare tragedies and moments and themes."

– Quentin Tarantino, *GQ*

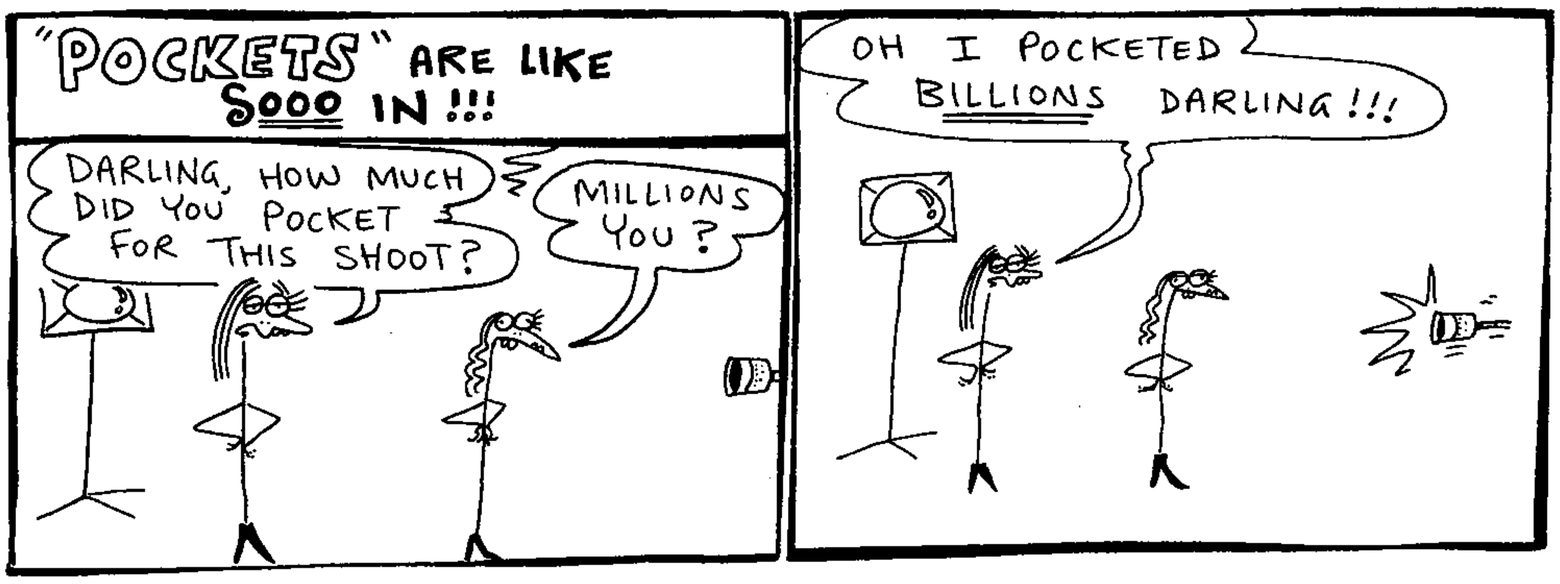
HOW FOOTBALL WORKS

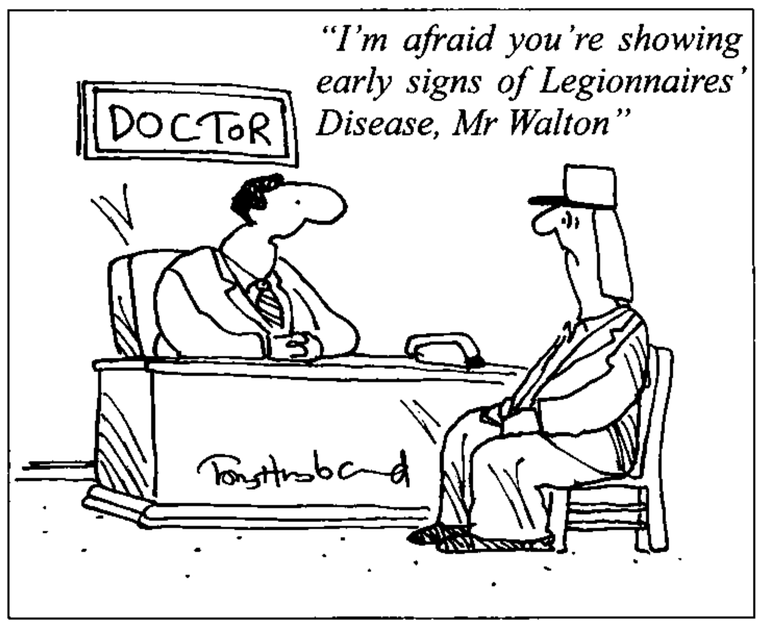
Sept 2006: Newcastle United chairman Freddy Shepherd sacks assistant manager Kevin Bond, after a BBC *Panorama* documentary alleges he admitted he had no problem accepting money from players' agents.

May 2007: Newcastle United chairman Freddy Shepherd appoints as manager Sam Allardyce, accused in the same documentary of taking a bung from an agent and whose son was also implicated.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER





"I'm afraid you're showing early signs of Legionnaires' Disease, Mr Walton"

Medicineballs

Denying the Dying

YOU HAVE admire the brass neck of "new" Labour. Having slavishly promoted "choice" and "putting patients in charge of the health service", it denies them the right to top up their NHS treatment with cancer drugs it refuses to fund.

Some of these have been deemed "cost ineffective" (ie too expensive) by the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE); others are stuck on the NICE waiting list; and some have been approved by NICE but bust primary care trusts (PCTs) are not funding them.

Other PCTs are ignoring the government and allowing covert co-payments, while other countries which claim to be part of the NHS (eg Scotland) are fast-tracking these drugs ahead of England. So Labour refuses to sanction co-payments on the grounds of inequality, when it has itself created a hugely unequal NHS.

Labour argues that if hospital patients wish to pay for drugs privately, they must be treated as private patients and pay for the "whole care package" (nurses, doctors, heating, bedding, gloves, needles, jelly etc etc). But in general practice, patients are prescribed private drugs every day (eg for erectile dysfunction) without having to pay for the consultation or building maintenance. Impotent men who don't have a very restricted list of medical conditions and can't afford to pay for their erections simply don't get them. Dentistry and long term care of the elderly fell off the NHS years ago, creating huge inequalities that Labour have been unable to correct despite spending record billions of taxpayers' money.

Indeed, the government's entire health philosophy is likely to make inequality worse, rather than better. Giving devolved parliaments and local PCTs control over healthcare rationing makes some sense, but if they can simply ignore NICE (which approves far more drugs than it denies) there seems little point in spending millions on their guidelines. And resurrecting the Tory's market reforms, which Gordon Brown seems so keen to persist with, can only create more winners and losers, and yet more inequality.

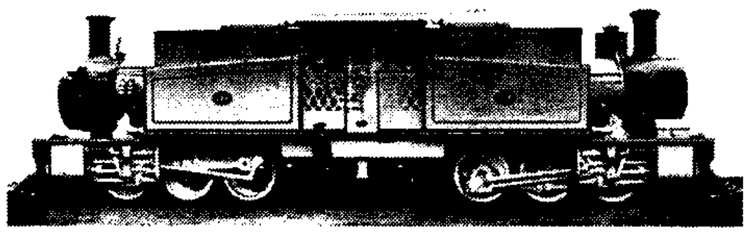
The key question is how many of these new drugs the NHS could afford if Labour hadn't wasted so much of the extra funding on constant re-organisation, quangos, management consultants,

"And you've never considered having this piece of shrapnel removed, Grandad?"

exorbitant PFI mortgages and private sector contracts, failed IT projects, over-generous doctors' contracts and training thousands of clinical staff it can no longer afford to employ. Perhaps as much as £50bn could have been better spent; but because political reforms aren't evaluated with the same rigour as medical treatments, it's impossible to be certain.

Gordon Brown needs to start by focusing on what works and what doesn't, starting with Patsy "a penny wasted in the NHS is a penny stolen from a patient" Hewitt. And if he isn't going to give patients control over NHS spending, the least he can do is let them use their own money to pay for care when the NHS fails them. A swift response would be welcome – spending the last few months of your life in court is hell on earth.

M.D.



SIGNAL FAILURES

Engineering disappointment

SO WHAT is Tony Blair's legacy on the railways? His biggest achievement is to have lowered still further the expectations of already disappointed passengers.

Punctuality figures that were seen as unacceptable 10 years ago are now hailed as a success after the meltdown that followed the 2000 Hatfield accident. South-east commuters travelling 30 minutes can no longer expect a seat for their £5,000 season tickets, while passengers who *do* get seats don't expect to stretch their legs.

People meekly accept punishing full fares on Virgin trains from London in the evening peak, which now starts mid afternoon. And a cross-country train journey on Sundays or bank holidays that doesn't involve a bus ride? A miracle.

Passengers now appreciate they are less important than performance statistics and trains must often terminate or start in the wrong place, skip stops or have their doors shut a minute or 30 seconds before departure to minimise fines for delays. A bailout of billions has accelerated Virgin West Coast journeys but on other services journeys have got slower. Rising fares and train-company profits no longer excite anger because everyone knows protest is futile.

Achieving this public stupor hasn't come cheap. Privatised rail still needs around *five times* the subsidy British Rail got in the 1980s economic peak, despite the extra income it earns from fares and its failure to pay for extra capacity.

In fact Mr Blair *began* wasting public money on railways even before becoming PM. He told the 1996 Labour conference the railways would be "publicly owned, publicly accountable" under his government. This anti-privatisation stance had two effects: BR's assets were flogged for much less than their real value because investors were wary; and franchises were offloaded in a rush to get them into private hands before May 1997 when Blair might slam on the brakes. Most franchise deals were so flawed they needed bailouts, contract variations or early termination; and the flaws have still to be solved in the Midlands.

In the event, Blair was too spineless even to renationalise Railtrack as it lurched deeper into crisis. The cost of buying it back was too high, yet the cost of Railtrack's neglect has proved to be higher.

After Hatfield exposed Railtrack's incompetence, Blair still insisted on privatising Tube infrastructure maintenance. The public-private partnership deals were so complicated (costing £455m to set up) he couldn't get them through before Ken Livingstone, who was anti-privatisation, became London mayor; so Blair ensured Tube powers didn't transfer to Livingstone until the PPPs' implementation. The PPPs aren't living up to their promises, but that's no major scandal because nobody expects them to after 10 years of Blair.

During the Blair decade phenomenal wads of cash have been spent to give an impression of forward planning, to ensure there's always something on the horizon to distract disgruntled travellers. John Birt and Rod Eddington have been paid to waffle at length. Consultants got rich as more than £30m was spent on regional "multi-modal studies" which were never going to be implemented. The short-lived Strategic Rail Authority paid consultants and advisers £112m in just two years.

Railtrack's 1999 "network management statement" was 348 glossy pages plus a 176-page Scottish supplement promising upgrades it couldn't deliver. "New" Labour's 10-year transport plan, published in 2000, was quickly obsolete. Its target of "up to 25 new light rail" lines encouraged four English cities to spend £300m preparing schemes which were scuppered by the government that set the target only four years earlier. In 2005 Blair personally pledged Manchester's "big bang" Metrolink package would go ahead. It hasn't.

The result is that the disappointed public no longer expects promised improvements to materialise. We no longer believe promises made about new franchise deals, and expect them to fall apart or contain nasty surprises like South West Trains' latest price hike. Still, such cynicism and defeatism at least makes Gordon Brown's job a bit easier...

'Dr B Ching'

Down on the Farm

THE TRAGEDY that has hung over Britain's farming in recent years was reflected perfectly in miniature by the furore over the fate of Shambo, the Friesian bull kept as a sacred animal by the monks of a Hindu monastery in the wilds of Carmarthenshire.

Three times vets employed by the Welsh Assembly tested Shambo for TB. When the third test showed Shambo to be a "reactor", the officials immediately wanted to kill him. The crude test did not show that Shambo was infected with TB. As the only test the officials will allow, it shows no more than that an animal has been exposed to TB and "raised anti-bodies". A test does exist to show when an animal is actually infected, but the officials won't permit it to be used.

No sooner had the monks protested against the imminent slaughter of their sacred bull, however, than Welsh farmers in their turn protested that there could not be one law for Hindus and another for everyone else. Shambo, they said, must be killed.

After all, terrified by the prospect of their own cattle catching TB, the farmers know the law says that any animal testing positive for TB must be destroyed. As some pointed out, the only animal recognised as sacred in this country is the badger, which most of the farmers regard as responsible for the epidemic of TB currently raging through their herds, but which they are not, of course, permitted to touch.

With that shining exception, farmers have become inured to the fact that the only response our officials recognise to any hint of disease in animals is to destroy them. Tens of millions of them were wiped out in the salmonella and BSE scares, the foot-and-mouth panic, at the slightest hint of bird flu. The skies of our countryside have been blackened for years as all those myriads of our fellow-creatures have gone up in smoke at the behest of those who rule over us – by far the majority of them being entirely healthy and destroyed only to "restore consumer confidence".

'Muckspreader'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

DAGGERS DRAWN

THERE were emotional scenes at Dagenham and Redbridge Football Club last month as Daggers supporters celebrated promotion to the Football League.

Among the joyous throng were a number of Barking and Dagenham councillors, including Labour's Graham Bramley and local BNP leader Richard Barnbrook. Alas Bramley and Barnbrook entered into a full and frank exchange of views which ended with Barnbrook's ejection from the club. He has complained to Inspector Knacker about Bramley's behaviour, but when the *Eye* called he was coy about what exactly was said to upset him.

Our Man in Dagenham says Barnbrook claims Bramley made "homophobic" remarks; but Barnbrook would not confirm or deny this. "There were eight or 10 witnesses," he told the *Eye*. "I was asked to leave. He wasn't. I have no other comment. It is a matter for the police and the courts." A B&D council spokesman said, "Cllr Bramley has no knowledge of any complaint being made to police and has not been contacted by the police. He does not wish to comment any further."

Last year Cllr Barnbrook, possibly the sole former "conceptual artist" in the BNP, denied that a film he made in 1989, *HMS Discovery: A Love Story*, which featured naked chaps frolicking in a river, was "homoerotic". "It was an art film, not a bloody porn film," he told the *Grauniad*.

One right-wing website subsequently featured a photograph of Cllr Barnbrook with the caption: "Is this a poofter or what?"

MONKEY BUSINESS

SO FAREWELL, then, Mike Padgett, former Tory councillor in West Somerset.

Opposed by an Independent in his formerly uncontested Porlock seat on 3 May, Padgett had a cunning plan. Over a few beers, he invited his opponent, Jon Freeman, to stand down. In exchange Padgett said he would dish the dirt on fellow Tory councillor Bryan Leaker, whom Freeman's partner was standing against in another ward.

This fiendish scheme had only two flaws. One was that there was no dirt to dish on Cllr Leaker. The second was that Freeman, smelling a rat, went "wired up" to the 90-minute meeting in Padgett's garden, and recorded the whole thing on his MP3 player.

Though his intention was to smear his Tory colleague, who he in fact describes as "incorruptible", as the drink flowed Padgett most adeptly took himself to the cleaners.

On the tape he suggested that if Freeman "takes his time in Porlock" – ie runs an ineffectual campaign – in return he will use his printing firm to create full-colour campaign leaflets for Freeman's partner, Julie Harvey-Smith, "for a tenner". He then asks, oafishly: "Is she a good-looker? Nice body?"

Padgett admits divulging confidential council information to his "best friend", local businessman John Addicott, who owns the Minehead estate agency and valuers Chanin and Thomas. He then tells Freeman there is "no alternative in Porlock – you could put a monkey in a blue shirt and it would still win".

Alas, once Freeman revealed the contents of his recording, the voters disproved Padgett's theory, electing Freeman and giving the Independent group control of the council!

● AND FAREWELL to Marina Pepper, former white witch and Page Three girl turned climate change warrior who, as a Lib Dem member of Lewes district council in Sussex, regaled locals with stories of how global warming had driven her to abandon her underwear and how she lay awake at night thinking about how to get a man *and* save the planet (*Eyes passim*). Alas, on 3 May Marina's elderly South Coast constituents booted her out and elected a Tory who will hopefully be keeping his pants on.

FISHY TALE

TRANSPARENCY and openness was the mantra of Isle of Wight council's former chief executive, Mike Fisher, before he was kicked into touch by county hall's new Tory masters with a handsome golden handshake.

Unfortunately he has proved disinclined to adopt his own motto when it comes to explaining his part in the crumbling Undercliff Drive road scheme awarded to civil engineers High-Point Rendel (*Eyes passim*).

Last week's meeting of the council committee set up to investigate how costs for the scheme soared from £5.6m to £12.9m was told that "Fishy" had refused to be interviewed. The chairman, Cllr George Brown, said: "It is reasonable to be disappointed and surprised at this. No one is more central to these issues than the former chief executive and I had hoped he would assist us." H-PR have also declined an invitation to enlighten the investigators.

Fishy would have had to explain, among other things, why the "directors' group" of officials he led sat on critical legal and consultants' opinions into irregular contractual procedures for almost two years. He might also have been quizzed on the lengths he went to in defence of his colleague Derek Rowell, "strategic director of economic development and regeneration", despite revelations of both Rowell and H-PR's previous involvement in a sea defences scheme at Scarborough that, er, was illegally awarded and went millions over budget (*Eyes passim*).

● WHITE van man is back in Southwark – as first citizen. Last week Cllr Nick Stanton's Lib Dem-Tory alliance forced the election of Cllr Bob Skelly as mayor by just two votes. Two years ago Skelly was sacked as the council's education supremo after joking that he went out every night in a big white van "and rounded up Caribbean boys and berated them for their lack of commitment to education".

Skelly's election was met by a walkout of Labour members, amid threats of boycotts and withdrawal of invitations from black organisations. Skelly has done nothing publicly to atone for his remarks in the intervening time, although he has helped Stanton cut grants to ethnic bodies. At least Southwark's black limousines are safe. The new mayor has no intention of being driven about in a white van.

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

THE MOST unlikely alliance in local politics was forged last week when Labour, Conservative and Plaid Cymru councillors got into bed together in Swansea to overthrow the minority Liberal Democrat-Independent grouping known as the "Swansea Administration".

The SA had been undermined by defections to the Tories and Independents but it is likely that the last straw for the opposition parties was the thought of Cllr Ioan "the idiot" Richard becoming mayor next year with Lib Dem approval.

Richard caused a storm earlier this year after sending an email to colleagues detailing a "cunning plan" to cause maximum disruption to the operation of council committees with the aim of securing as many chairmanships – and their accompanying allowances – for himself and his mates (*Eye* 1178). The new grouping's initials, rather than their business acumen, is no doubt responsible for their new moniker – "Swansea PLC".

"Oh, come on – do we really need a residents' association?"

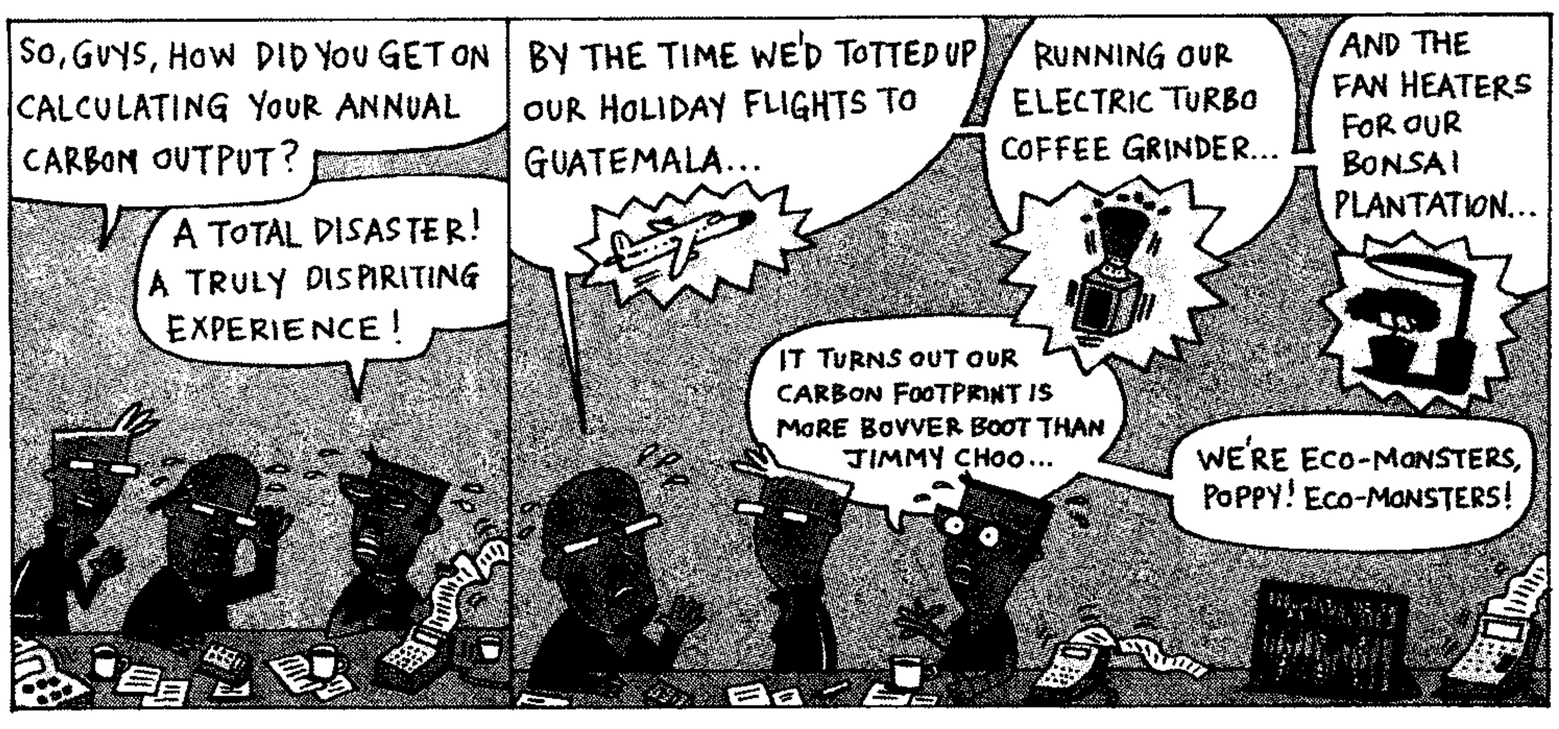
LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELDS

AS THE row over the new playground-less City Academy in Peterborough rumbles on, outdoor space at other schools is still being squeezed in local authorities' relentless search for land to sell.

Therfield School in Leatherhead was awarded "sports college" status in 2005; but just a few months later, Surrey county council announced the sale of a chunk of its playing field to pay for new drama facilities. A public inquiry into the sell-off is due to begin this week, and if Usk Vale Properties gets the go-ahead from the government planning inspector, 90 new houses will spring up on the land.

Planning inspectors are no great defenders of playing fields. Earlier this month an inspector over-ruled Fenland district council's objection to 46 houses on open space next to a primary school in Chatteris. The council had been trying to hold out for a possible sport or recreation use of the land, but the inspector said there was no "identifiable need for more open space" so it would be unreasonable to prevent development.

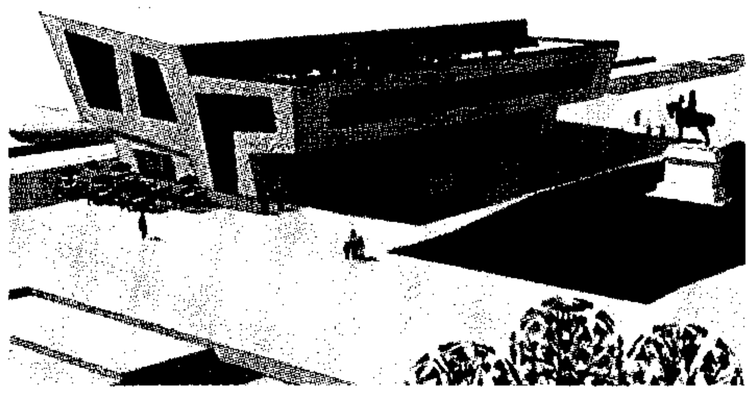
IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER


SO, GUYS, HOW DID YOU GET ON CALCULATING YOUR ANNUAL CARBON OUTPUT?
A TOTAL DISASTER! A TRULY DISPIRITING EXPERIENCE!
BY THE TIME WE'D TOTTED UP OUR HOLIDAY FLIGHTS TO GUATEMALA...
RUNNING OUR ELECTRIC TURBO COFFEE GRINDER...
AND THE FAN HEATERS FOR OUR BONSAI PLANTATION...
IT TURNS OUT OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT IS MORE BOVVER BOOT THAN JIMMY CHOO...
WE'RE ECO-MONSTERS, POPPY! ECO-MONSTERS!

NOOKS and CORNERS

MORE depressing but predictable news from Liverpool, European City of Culture for 2008.

In preparing the site on Mann Island next to Pierhead for the gratuitous Museum of Liverpool Life (*Eyes passim*), that twisted shoe box on stilts that will be an unwelcome neighbour to the Three Graces, the splendid trio of Edwardian buildings which stand in a World Heritage Site, the remains of an early dock have been discovered.



The Manchester Dock, which lay between the former Canning and George docks, was built in 1785 and enlarged in 1818. It survived until the 1930s when it was filled with rubble from building the Mersey tunnel. The sandstone walls of the entry to the dock from the Mersey and the original timber lock gates have now been uncovered.

As it is 60 years older than the famous Albert Dock, now restored as the home of the Merseyside Maritime Museum and much else, this dock is of immense importance to the history of Liverpool and for understanding the development of the city's dock system.

You might have expected this discovery to be greeted with enthusiasm by those charged with protecting Liverpool's legacy of historic structures. After all, the design for the Museum of Liverpool Life could be modified so the dock can be preserved and restored. But this is Liverpool, where the past is regarded as a nuisance until outside agencies intervene and tell the city it matters (the council once tried to destroy Albert Dock until Michael Heseltine stepped in). So it has been left to private individuals to try to protect the Manchester Dock.

English Heritage has been asked to list what remains of it while UNESCO, which is concerned about the way Liverpool is treating its World Heritage Site, has been asked to intervene. But UNESCO moves slowly and is not having its crucial inspection meeting in Liverpool until June – and English Heritage has done nothing.

Liverpool, of course, has acted swiftly. Faced with inconvenient heritage, the only thing to do is to get rid of it as soon as possible. The lock gates have been destroyed as part of the work preparing the site for the wretched museum, and the dock will soon be filled in.

Further east, meanwhile, other perfectly decent buildings, such as the premises for Voss Motors, designed by Herbert Rowse, Liverpool's best 20th century architect, are to be removed to make way for black-glass commercial blocks.

A little to the north, in front of the Three Graces, stands the terminal for the Mersey ferries, a mediocre but innocuous structure. With the support of Liverpool city council, "Merseytravel" wants to replace this by a pretentious new three-storey building (pictured). As the old Mersey ferry service has now dwindled to a single excursion boat for tourists, it is hard to understand why this £10m structure is necessary, or why it needs to be so big and tall. No doubt it will contain an interpretation centre as well as a café. CABE has "no reservations" about its scale (so that's all right then) and Hamilton Architects have made the design as modish and exciting as possible by having outwardly sloping walls meeting at jagged angles – no doubt inspired by the design for the nearby museum by the Danish firm "3XN".

Talking of which, it has emerged that the funds set aside for fitting out the interior of this £65m project are being siphoned off to pay for the travertine external facing. So, unless National Museums Liverpool can find a lot more money, it will be saddled with an empty and useless – but doubtless award-winning – building. Not that David Fleming, the director of NML, is concerned. "Like all great buildings," he insists, "it is expressive of its period, it respects the past, and looks to the future." How it will respect the past is far from clear – especially as its construction now involves destroying the Manchester Dock – but it certainly will, alas, be representative of its time: a period of mindless modernity and posturing egomania allied to grasping commercialism, all masquerading as "culture".

HOORAY for Waverley Borough Council in Surrey, which has dared do what most local authorities are too scared, mean or irresponsible to do, even though they have the powers under historic buildings legislation: it has sent in builders to carry out emergency repairs to a listed building being deliberately neglected by its owners.

The beneficiary is Undershaw, the house at Hindhead built in the 1890s by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle for himself and his wife. It was bought in 2002 by developers who have since tried to mutilate it by chopping it up into flats (Eye 1179).

Meanwhile, the Victorian Society awaits the result of its appeal against the refusal to upgrade Undershaw to grade I by Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell. She dismissed the house as "unremarkable", adding: "The building most closely associated with [Sherlock] Holmes is 221b Baker Street. I would be only too pleased to consider listing that building Grade I should such a request come forward." It remains unclear whether Jowell was joking or really thinks the fictional detective's address actually exists.

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

I-SPY *Myers Beach, Florida*

Submitted by Andrew Hilson. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

ANYONE who reads the notice boards in Westminster Cathedral will know how fervently this bastion of Catholic tradition has begun to embrace the cause of new music. But next month, a huge new work from that most elevated of Christian composers, John Tavener, sets a different tone altogether.

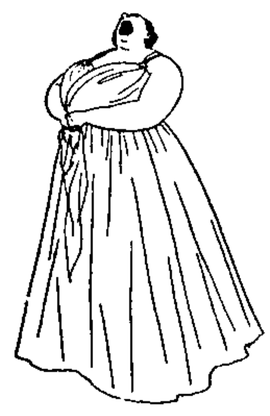
Far from drawing on the usual meditative divines, it is based on the Koran and sets the 99 names of Allah to music, to be intoned over an hour and a half with choir, full orchestra and Tibetan gongs. Tavener has apparently written the piece because, though a Christian, he believes that all religions amount to the same thing. But what does the Cathedral think it's up to intoning the names of Allah in a building devoted to one who the gospel records saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me"?

The clergy aren't anxious to be drawn on the subject, but it looks very much like a desperate piece of Islamic appeasement in the aftermath of Pope Benedict's unfortunate remarks last year. And appeasement at a high level: these 99 names have been commissioned by none other than the Prince of Wales, next in line to be head of the Church of England, who says he wants to be known as Defender of Faith, not Defender of *The* Faith.

To a liberal-minded Christian this may all seem unexceptionable, even worthy. But it's treading dangerous ground, not least because no one seems to have done much research into what Muslims will think about giving the names of Allah full choral treatment in a Catholic cathedral. "It will be a respectful, reverent event and we're not anticipating problems," said a spokesman. So that's alright then.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

OUT OF CON-TEXT



LAST April, when Simon Rattle's production of Debussy's Pelleas et Melisande opened the Salzburg Festival, the Sunday Times's Hugh Canning pronounced himself unimpressed.

The production, he declared, made "for an evening of catatonia in the theatre," with costumes that make the company look "as if they are all on their way to a circus-themed fancy-dress ball in memory of Liberace. This is catwalk opera, dramatically null and meaningless."

This month the production opened at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. Prominent on its posters was the following boast: "'A catwalk opera – *Sunday Times.*'"

LADY JUDGE: ATOMIC KITTEN

BARBARA Thomas Judge, the Eva Peron lookalike who chairs the UK Atomic Energy Authority when not attending to her 29 other jobs, is married to a former director-general of the Conservative Party, Sir Paul Judge. But there is no official Tory policy on whether or not she is a good thing. This became clear in a parliamentary debate on the UKAEA two weeks ago, initiated by Iain Duncan Smith.

Though most of his speech was devoted to attacking UKAEA's reluctance to clean up radioactivity on land adjoining the Dounreay nuclear site, Duncan Smith couldn't resist a dig at Barbara's apparent lack of qualifications for the post. He noted that in a *Daily Mail* interview on 4 May "she said that when she was offered the job, she prepared for her unique role by studying her son's physics books. After the deputy prime minister resigns, he could presumably put in for the job of chief scientific adviser to the government on the basis of such qualifications."

This infuriated his colleague John Gummer. "I have known Lady Judge for some years," he whinnied. "I want to say absolutely clearly that Lady Judge's qualities are remarkable." Another Tory MP, Brian Binley, knocked the ball back over the net by wondering if UKAEA directors such as Judge "are able to carry out their responsibility to protect my constituents in that highly dangerous but vital industry. I am not sure that they are qualified to do so… There is a deep concern about some of the appointments that have been made."

Tory MP Charles Hendry leapt to her defence: "I have also known Lady Judge for some years and I also have the highest regard for her. The question of her qualifications needs to be seen in perspective." What mattered was her devotion to duty. Ed Vaizey MP, who also turned out to know Barbara, declared that "Lady Judge is an effective chairman who gives more than twice the amount of time for which she is contracted".

Impressive if true. Since she is paid £60,000 for a two-day week at UKAEA, this means she actually gives them four days a week. Winding up the debate, Labour minister Jim Fitzpatrick confirmed it: "We probably get twice as much of her time as we pay for." So how does she fit in all her other roles? "The fact is that Lady Judge's various non-UKAEA commitments take less than one and a half days a week."

Do her other employers realise how little time she spends on them? This tireless executive is deputy chairman of Friends Provident plc, chairman of Private Equity Investor plc, senior independent director at Quintain Estates and Development plc, and a director of Portmeirion Group plc, Hardy Underwriting plc and Victory Corporation plc. And that's just the public limited companies: she also graces the boards of PA Consulting and venture-capital group Dynamic Solutions. She's a senior adviser to Hill & Associates, a Hong Kong security business, and chairs Losonoco, an American energy company. She's a director of Planet Group Inc, a credit-card processing company based in Long Island, NY, and an adviser to New York investment bank Cross Border Enterprises. She also advises Millennium Associates, a mergers-and-acquisition specialist.

And then there are the many public roles – board member at the Department for Constitutional Affairs and the DTI's performance monitoring committee, chairman of the School of Oriental and African Studies, trustee of the Royal Academy and the Wallace Collection – and so, interminably, on. She also finds time to be deputy chairman of the government's Financial Reporting Council, which invigilates corporate governance. In the parliamentary debate two weeks ago, Brian Binley MP quoted the FRC's advice to companies: "Directors should not be involved in too many organisations, with a normal ceiling of four directorships."

But the FRC's deputy chairman is clearly an exception. As DTI minister Jim Fitzpatrick said, claims that she has too many directorships to do her UKAEA job properly are "absolutely without foundation". Who can doubt it?

THE SECRET HISTORY OF JACK STRAW

AT a recent lobby briefing, Jack Straw discussed whether Inspector Knacker should investigate press leaks about police counter-terrorism raids.

Oddly, he made no mention of a leak inquiry in the mid-1970s – in which he was a prime suspect. It was a scandalous case of political dirty-tricks, and with Straw due to bag a senior cabinet post under Gordon Brown, it may be time to revisit this unsolved mystery.

The story emerged five years ago in Joe Haines's memoirs, *Glimmers of Twilight*. In 1974, Haines revealed, Harold Wilson asked his social security secretary, Barbara Castle, to get the National Insurance records of Norman Scott, the ex-lover of Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe. When Castle resisted, Wilson told her to "get Jack Straw to do it", Straw then being Castle's special adviser. And, Haines recorded, Wilson "got what he wanted".

Why did the prime minister want Scott's records? With no overall majority in parliament, he feared that Ted Heath and Jeremy Thorpe might consider forming a Tory-Liberal pact against him as they did briefly after the February 1974 election. According to Haines, the Scott file was "for possible future use: i.e. if the Heath-Thorpe coalition were revived again in another close-fought election, he would play the Scott card".

As Peter Oborne commented in the *Spectator* when Haines's book appeared: "This was an utterly disgraceful and disreputable operation: the abuse of the private records of a British citizen in order to smear or very possibly blackmail the leader of a rival political party."

Following the revelation, Straw's solicitor Geoffrey Bindman issued a statement confirming that "the facts as stated in the Haines book are accurate. They do not suggest Mr Straw was doing anything improper in any way. Mr Straw's involvement is innocent… Through her principal private secretary, Mrs Castle asked her second permanent secretary Sir Lance Errington to get the file which he duly did. Then the principal private secretary and Mrs Castle's special adviser Jack Straw read the file and produced a report summarising its content."

When details of Scott's NI files reached Fleet Street, Wilson was obliged to set up a leak inquiry. MI5 sleuths went to question Straw, who vehemently denied trying to make political mischief out of Thorpe's predicament. After Wilson's resignation in 1976, BBC hacks Barrie Penrose and Roger Courtiour got on the case. Their book *The Pencourt File* mentions an unnamed Whitehall official who "went white" when they asked about Scott's missing NI file, and who assured them that he knew nothing about it. The official was in fact Jack Straw; and his denial was false. (It was Harold Wilson himself who asked Penrose and Courtiour not to identify Straw in the book.)

In October 2002, while writing his *Spectator* piece on the affair, Peter Oborne submitted several questions to Straw. Did he think his behaviour was proper? To what use did he think the information about Scott would be put? Did he believe that political advisers should have access to private citizens' social security records? Why did he give a false denial to Penrose and Courtiour? Did he leak Scott's records to the press? Could he confirm that MI5 interviewed him in the leak inquiry?

Answer came there none. Almost five years on, with Straw running Gordon Brown's leadership campaign and preparing for cabinet promotion, isn't an explanation long overdue?

Letters

Private Eye

Browne and outed

Sir,

God, you really don't like poofs, do you?

Baron Browne of Madingley no doubt deserves all the scrutiny you can muster about 15 deaths in Texas (hardly a Piper Alpha), oil spills in Alaska (hardly an Exxon Valdez), possible perjury (OK, you got Archer and Aitken, but he was being blackmailed), alleged misuse of company funds (hardly a Conrad Black), closeness to Blair and the media etc, etc (entire cast of Cash for Honours). It's just that the main problem you seem to have with him is his homosexuality. You really haven't moved on since Dear Bill and the "shirt-lifters" in the 80s, have you? Did Slicker really put him in the same paragraph as Skilling, Ebbers, Saunders and Slater? When someone is being blackmailed over a private matter and the media are complicit by printing the story, you are normally our bastion of sanity in exposing their hypocrisy, but you seem to have a blind spot on this issue.

Your sanest correspondent on this matter was actually Dave (Cedric) Spart, and that's a first in my book!

I will not be cancelling my subscription, as I am determined to witness who evolves first, you or the Sun.

Yours heterosexually,
JEREMY SIMPSON,

Via email.

Sour note

Sir,

How clever of you on page 20 to notice that the name of Lord Browne's companion was also that of a famous French singer of songs. Not so clever, to put into Lord Browne's mouth the words of one such ditty. Jeff Chevalier is not a "leetle boy", he is a grown man and consenting adult. The cartoon not only impugns Lord Browne's already battered reputation further, but fuels the ignorance and bigotry that makes many people in this country and abroad still confuse and conflate homosexuality with paedophilia. I expect better from your otherwise astute and very amusing publication. Shame on you.

PATRICK WILDE,

Via email.

"Oi! You looking at my bird?"

Missed opportunity

Sir,

Re: Retirement of our Dear Leader.

Didn't Hilaire Belloc say it all most succinctly when he wrote:

Thus richly, with ridiculous display,
The politician was laid away.
Whilst all of his acquaintances sneered and slanged
I wept: I'd longed to see him hanged.

Yours faithfully,
ANDREW LUNT,

Salisbury, Wilts.

Lookalike

Pete

Cherie

Sir,

I was struck by the remarkable resemblance between Cherie "married to an old rocker" Blair and Pete Doherty. Are they by any chance related? Would this explain the latter's musical talent?

MATTHEW GARDINER,

Via email.

Kicking off

Sir,

Re: Eye 1184 p9.

Your report of my statements to MPs regarding "reducing television viewing must become the new priority for child health" and that I indeed appeared on the BBC children's programme Live & Kicking are accurate. However, may I point out that most of my appearances were at least 14 to 15 years ago when I did an infrequent health education slot (subjects included eating disorders, childhood cancer, glycaemic foods etc) aimed at teenagers and adolescents, while studies linking early TV exposure to health problems in under threes have only appeared in the past three years – more than a decade later. Moreover, my statements to MPs were not based on my opinion but were an elaboration of a recent research review paper I published in the academic science journal Biologist [Vol 54 (1) 2007]. And I am not alone, the front cover of The Lancet [Vol 364 (9430)] also carried the headline "Limit Television Viewing: a new priority for health", while an editorial in the American Medical Association's Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine now states "[screen] media need to be recognised as a major public health issue". (Vol 160, 2006).

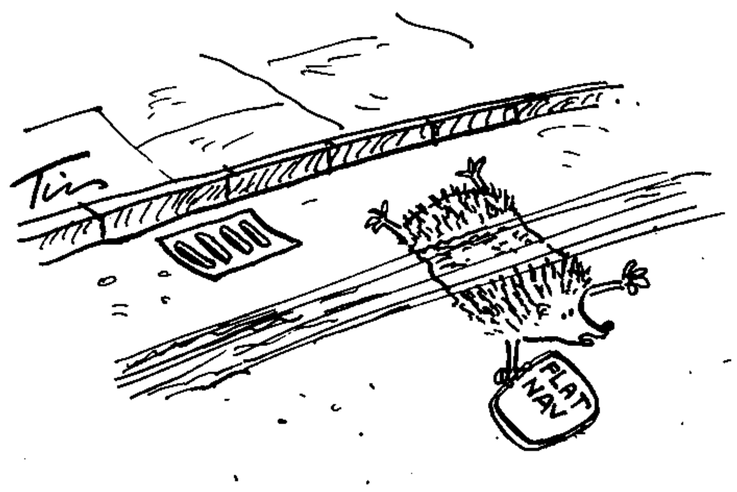
I am in a profession that has to respond to new research even if it appears to conflict with what was believed to be harmless just a few years ago. The tone of your article implies that I am a hypocrite by omission. I hope that this fuller account of my background makes things clearer. By the way, you may be interested to know that since I have published material on how poor TV ratings mean better child health, I have never had so many offers to become a television presenter. Can Ian Hislop please advise me?

Yours,
Uncle in agony,
ARIC SIGMAN,

Via email.

John was the first councillor to follow up demands for 20mph speed zones in residential areas which have helped to produce the risk to pedestrians and children.

Walton Conservatives



Flat Nav

Fall-flat nav

Sir,

OK, I'll bite. For how many more issues will we have to put up with jokes based around "sat nav"?

Oh, and it's Captain, not Colonel, Hastings in Poirot but that's me being pedantic and it's not quite enough to make me cancel my subscription. Though I might be using my sat nav to find a new magazine if those cartoons continue...

Regards,
PHILIP LICKLEY,

Via email.

Lookalike

Yellow Bastard

President

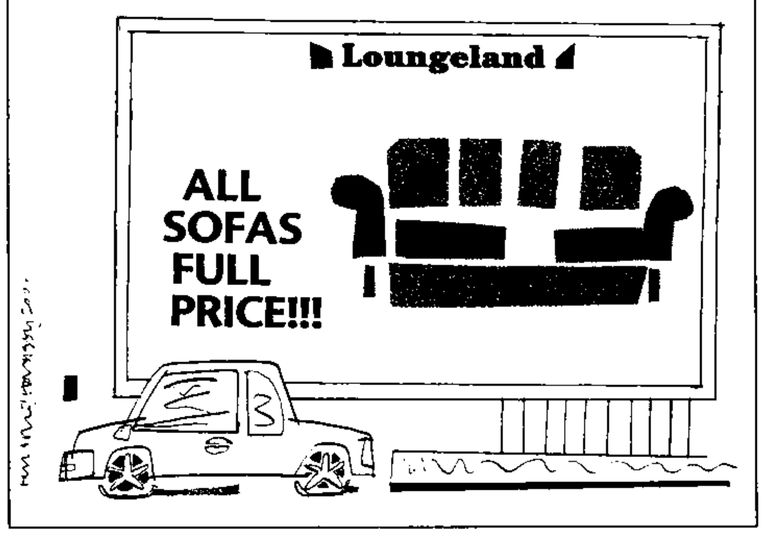
Sir,

I can't help feeling there might be some connection between Sin City author Frank Miller's horrific cartoon creation "The Yellow Bastard" and the new President of the 5th Republic. I think the French electorate need to know.

ANON.,

Via email.

Scenes You Seldom See



Tommy rotter

Sir,

I imagine this is one of dozens of replies to Jack Smith's imperial hangover (Eye, Letters 1183 & 1184). One of Mr Smith's letters was just about tolerable; but two? It was barely funny the first time around!

Perhaps if Mr Smith dropped the jingoistic cliché for one minute he would realise that there is a world of difference between the airing of "Mark of Cain" and the Virginia Tech Massacre coverage! Maybe it was the sizable volumes of Kipling's works that obscured Mr Smith's view of the abuse photographs, depicting squaddies riding detainees like surfboards, three years ago (rather than the fake ones The Mail mocked up in a Kent barracks), or for that matter the numerous other reports of abuse on the part of certain British soldiers in Iraq. The Iraqi militias have already taken offence to the British presence.

The airing of a fictional drama engaging the same issues is hardly going to give them a second wind!

The videos of the killer at Virginia Tech, on the other hand, were produced solely for the purpose of publicising and immortalising his violent actions that day. NBC and the other news groups did exactly what he wanted them to, and have thus given all the other vulnerable and neurotic individuals out there an appealing precedent; should they ever wish to end it all in the same way!

Incidentally, his name was Cho Seung Hui. Obviously the "White Man's Burden" doesn't extend to getting the "yellow man's" name right!

Yours unpatriotically,
JON DAVIES,

Denbighshire, Wales.

Bush fires

Sir,

If Jack Smith (Eye 1183) is concerned with putting squaddies' lives in danger he must be incensed that they were sent to Iraq in the first place – to a place where they were not welcome, fighting alongside a US force whose insensitive, heavy-handed tactics have surely put more lives in danger than any TV programme ever could and, worst of all, on the back of a bunch of lies. Diminishing numbers in the armed forces could be because people don't want to risk their lives so that George W can complete his Daddy's unfinished business.

ALEX BUCHAN,

Reading, Berks.

Lawyers' fat rate

Sir,

Wrong On Rights (Eye 1184).

Why do you criticise flat-rate legal aid fees? Lawyers are entitled to such reasonable fees, but surely you don't want to see them making millions on the backs of these poor people, like the lawyer who battened on the miners with "white fingers"? Sometimes I wonder whose side you are on.

CHARLES SOLOMON,

Upper Poppleton, York.

SOLUTIONS

"Elliot Loohire: Street Urination Solutions" – *public toilets*

"GN, the world leader in innovative headset solutions" – *headsets*

"Heatrae Sadia Supreme: The ultimate in instant boiling water solutions" – *water boilers*

"Cool Runnings: Perishable Freight Solutions" – *refrigerated lorries*

"The Company of Animals: Behavioural Solutions" – *dog leads*

"DRS Solutions include scalable e-counting technology" – *electronic voting service responsible for Scottish election shambles*

All submitted by readers

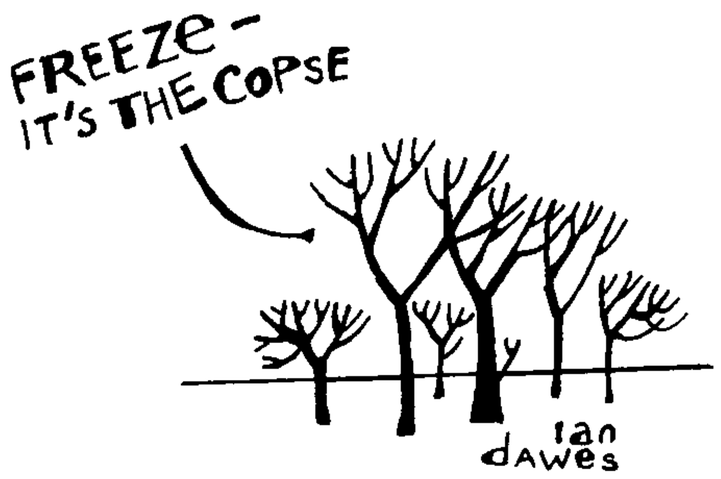
Molyneux longer

Sir,

I enjoyed, as usual, Private Eye 1183. However your normal high standards of journalistic accuracy slipped somewhat in "PFI: MoD's Lousy Defence" (p. 27). Please note that Steve Molyneux left the employment of the University of Wolverhampton at the end of September 2003.

Yours faithfully,
PROFESSOR GERALD BENNETT,

Pro-vice-chancellor, University of Wolverhampton.



Poor act

Sir,

If the best you can do is lambast David Suchet for not being a fat bastard (Eye 1184), the forefront of British satire is in a poor state. I thought he made rather a good fist of it. You might have a point though – I mean next we might have a black man play Othello.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN ANGEL,

Stowmarket.

False advances

Sir,

Delighted, of course, to be described as an "uber agent" in the current issue of your illustrious organ. I must however correct your assertion in the Worstsellers List that my client Carey Marx received an advance of 250k for his book "Marry Me". He actually received 15k and while I realise that this fact may diminish my newly attained uber status I wanted to put the record straight.

Sincerely,
SIMON TREWIN,

Joint head of books, Peters Fraser & Dunlop Ltd.

● *Bookworm writes: So who hyped the book on the Publishers' Marketplace as a major deal ($500k+)? The information usually comes from the agent or sometimes the publisher...*

Lookalike

Wolfowitz

Count

Sir,

Has anyone else noticed the uncanny likeness between head of the World Bank Paul Wolfowitz and number-loving puppet Count von Count from Sesame Street?

JAMES DIBLEY,

Via email.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"They will be consistent throughout the season, but their consistency will be up and down."

STEVE COTTERILL, Lancashire Telegraph
(Brian Beresford)

"The number of Britons on anti-depressants has hit an all-time high."

KIRSTY WALKER, Channel 5
(Alex Whitaker)

"We've all lost it, but there's losing it and there's losing it – and that's the latter."

RICHARD BACON, Radio 5 Live
(Michael Bench-Capon)

"You need your strikers getting between 19 and 20 goals a season each."

MICKY ADAMS, Sky Sports 1
(Fraser Henderson)

"He [John Parrot] has jumped out of his chair like a greyhound."

JOHN VIRGO, BBC
(Andy Croxall)

"Don't slouch... you'll end up on Reality Television"

Lubbe letters

Sir,

When I was a reporter on the Daily Express in the middle 50s, I asked Sefton Delmer about the Reichstag fire, and he said that the feeble-minded Dutchman van der Lubbe's "confession" was forced out of him. Delmer, an Etonian who spoke fluent German (his father was Professor of English at Berlin University), arrived at the scene at 9.50pm, five minutes after the fire broke out. (Expressmen joked that he had started it as he had the world scoop). He joined Hitler, Captain Goering the Interior Minister, Goebbels and von Papen in the smouldering building 20 minutes later when it was under control. Goering told Hitler that it was the work of Communists, and that several Communist deputies were there 20 minutes before the fire was started.

"This is a God-given signal," Hitler said to Delmer, "and if this fire, as I believe, turns out to be the handiwork of Communists, then there is nothing that shall stop us now crushing out this murder pest with an iron fist. You are witnessing the beginning of a great new epoch in German history. This fire is the beginning."

Sweeping his hand around, Hitler continued: "You see this flaming building. If this Communist spirit got hold of Europe for but two months it would be all aflame like this building."

At 12.30am, on 28 February 1933, "Tom" Delmer's story was running on the presses in London. At the same time Hitler's order "for the Protection of the Reich against Communist danger" was being distributed in Berlin. It had been printed four hours after the fire was started. 24 hours later all the Communist deputies of the German Parliament were in jail, soon to be followed by many Socialists and anyone suspected of sympathising with Marxism.

Yours even more pedantically,
PETER KINSLEY,

Via email.

Sir,

In a letter entitled "Lubbe's labours lost" from self-confessed pedant Tom Carter of Somerton, Somerset he states that the Reichstag Fire "culprit was a Dutch-anarcho-Communist epileptic called Marius van der Lubbe".

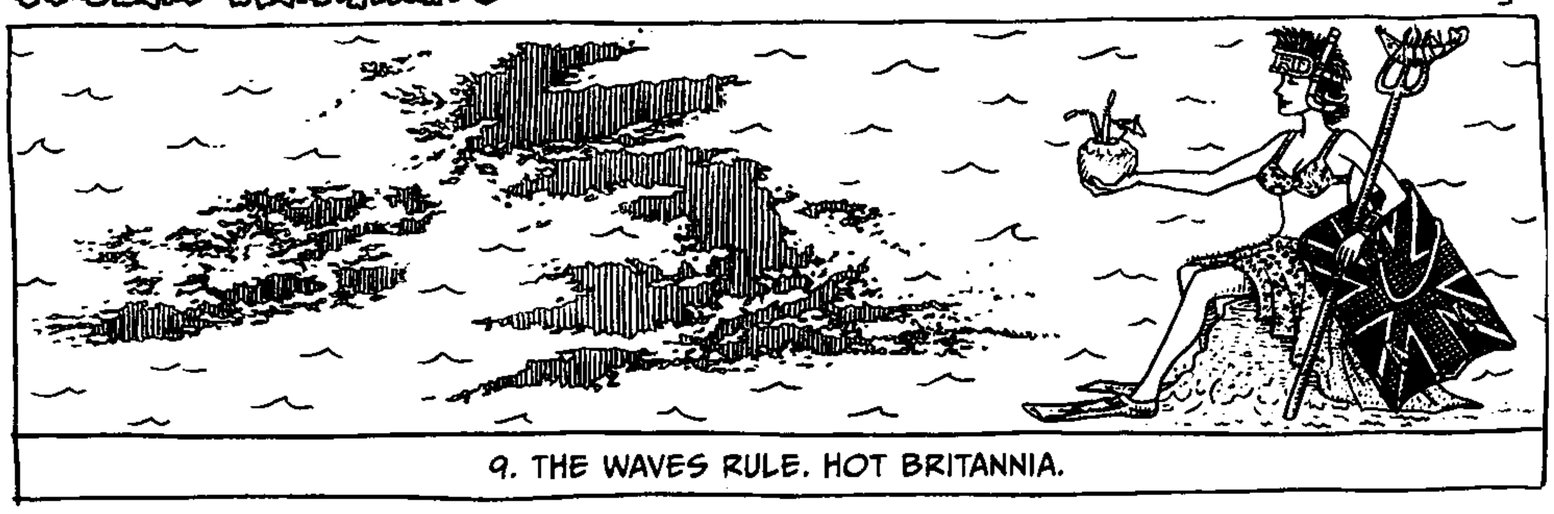
Perhaps he (or you) could tell me what the word "epileptic" adds to the sentence except to reinforce the old prejudice of epilepsy as some form of mental illness.

Sorry to bring a serious note to the paper.

However it may distress you to hear that I shall not be cancelling my subscription.

STUART WELLS,

Nottingham.



Letter from **Abuja**

from Our Own Correspondent

LAST MONTH's elections were variously described by international monitors as a charade, a joke and in no way a reflection of the popular will. But few are laughing here in Nigeria. Even Britain and the United States, so keen on our oil, refused to offer congratulations.

Our outgoing president, Olusegun Obasanjo, installed his handpicked replacement, Umaru Yar'Adua, and ensured that many key aides became state governors. One even did so after securing more than 100 percent of the vote on the first count. In Abia state, the governor-elect wasn't able to vote because he was prison, charged with corruption; and in Ondo state the ruling People's Democratic Party pulled off the impossible: winning a senate seat without fielding a candidate!

The only person who could put a slight gloss on our morally bankrupt regime was your Baroness Lynda Chalker, the former Conservative overseas development minister appointed by Obesanjo to chair our Honorary International Investors Council (HIIC). M'lady wasn't in the country to observe the elections, but she knew who to blame for the criticism.

After congratulating the president-elect, she told the press not to be hypocritical: "I want to say one thing to the international media. It is all very well to believe that the system in America and Europe are without faults. They are not... Let us get rid of the superficial comments and let us help the government of Nigeria, the in-coming government, to put right those things which they know are not perfect."

Whether putting thieves in charge of a bank is the solution is unclear. But Baroness Chalker is the least of our worries – and she may not have her HIIC sinecure for much longer. After the meeting, an aide of Yar'Adua was heard to say: "Who was that strange little woman who talked to us like we were children?"

Postcard From **Bhopal**

THE GAS leak at the Union Carbide chemical plant in Bhopal that killed thousands and injured many more in 1984 was tragic enough. So why, more than two decades later, are lives still blighted by the toxic mess left behind?

Thanks to India's Right to Information Act, tenacious activists here have been gathering a fascinating collection of letters which reveal the lengths to which some Indian officials are going to relieve Dow Chemical of any liability arising from the failure of its subsidiary to clean up after the disaster.

Greenpeace describes the abandoned factory site as a "world toxic hotspot". And Amnesty International and the BBC, among others, have reported on the severe health problems still caused by abandoned chemicals leaking into our water supplies.

"Dow is poisoning Bhopalis a second time," said Bhopal survivors' leader Rashida Bee. "In affected communities, an unnaturally high proportion of children are born malformed or brain-damaged. But many people have no other source of water."

The unearthed letters reveal how Dow chief executive officer Andrew Liveris wrote last November to our ambassador in the US, asserting that before Dow would consider more investment in India "the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers should now withdraw its application for a financial deposit against remediation costs [of the Union Carbide factory]." Dow's letter was passed to the Indian Planning Commission by industrialist Ratan Tata, the new owner of British Steel, who reiterated Dow's demand.

The ministry's 2005 court application invokes "polluter pays" legislation to request a $22m deposit from Dow towards the cost of cleaning the Bhopal site. Survivors have vowed to step up their campaign against Dow until the corporation accepts its liabilities, cleans the contaminated soil and water, and compensates and makes provision for the medical care of those who have suffered.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"Bioart is the first really new art form of the twenty-first century," Adam Zaretsky told visitors to his laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, "and it's starting to take hold. We bioartists use live tissues, bacteria, and living organisms to create works that blur the traditional distinctions between science and art. The whole act of creating art from genes, cells, and other organisms is a direct critique of the scientific world itself, and of the general complacency of the public.

"For example, I have gotten interesting results from playing Engelbert Humperdinck's Greatest Hits for 48 hours at a time to a Petri dish containing 25ml of an industrial strain of E coli. I use some vibrating plate speakers from Acouve to do this, and the production of antibiotics increases whenever I conduct the experiment. There are multiple possible explanations for this 'Humperdinck effect,' but one possibility is that the increase is caused by annoyance. The E coli cells may be bothered by being subjected to loud, really awful lounge music for two days straight, so they respond aesthetically by producing antibiotics, to fight against a perceived enemy in the only way they know.

"I know that some people regard my work as frivolous, but my endeavours are grounded in a very serious and complex understanding of biologic and genetic issues that are very much a part of contemporary society." *(Tech Digest, 8/3/07. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*

– o –

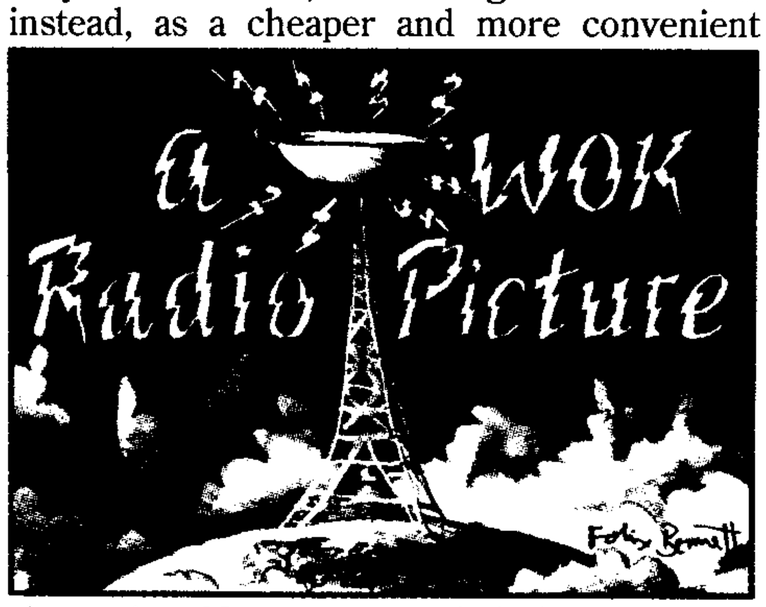
"I was the first person to stop at the accident scene," taxi driver Hans Lantto told reporters near Rosvik, "so I got out of my car to try and assist the injured. It was -25C, so I let two slightly injured victims sit in my Mercedes taxi while we waited for the ambulance service to arrive. When the rescue services turned up, they asked me where the victims were, so I pointed to my car. But before I could explain to them that my taxi had not been involved in the crash, they took out their axes and hydraulic shears and begun cutting its roof off, without asking the survivors if they could simply get out through the doors.

"Only after they'd lifted both people out through the top would they listen to me, and even then they still insisted that removal of my taxi's roof was the correct thing to do, and that the decision had been made after consultation with the medical authorities. A new taxi will cost me 450,000 crowns, and I'm having a hell of a job convincing the insurance company that I'm not making the whole story up." (Aftonbladet [Sweden], 7/2/07. Spotter: Tapio Hase)

– o –

"I designed my first wok transmitter last year, when I wanted to provide wireless broadband for my house" Ken Jones told reporters in Ardgowan, New Zealand. "When I discovered that satellite dishes cost $400, and were the same size as a wok, I thought I could do better than that, so I bought a $10 kitchen wok and began experimenting. We spent a lot of time getting it right, because when we first installed it you couldn't get a signal to travel the width of the paddock. But we persevered, and now it can reach up to 20kms.

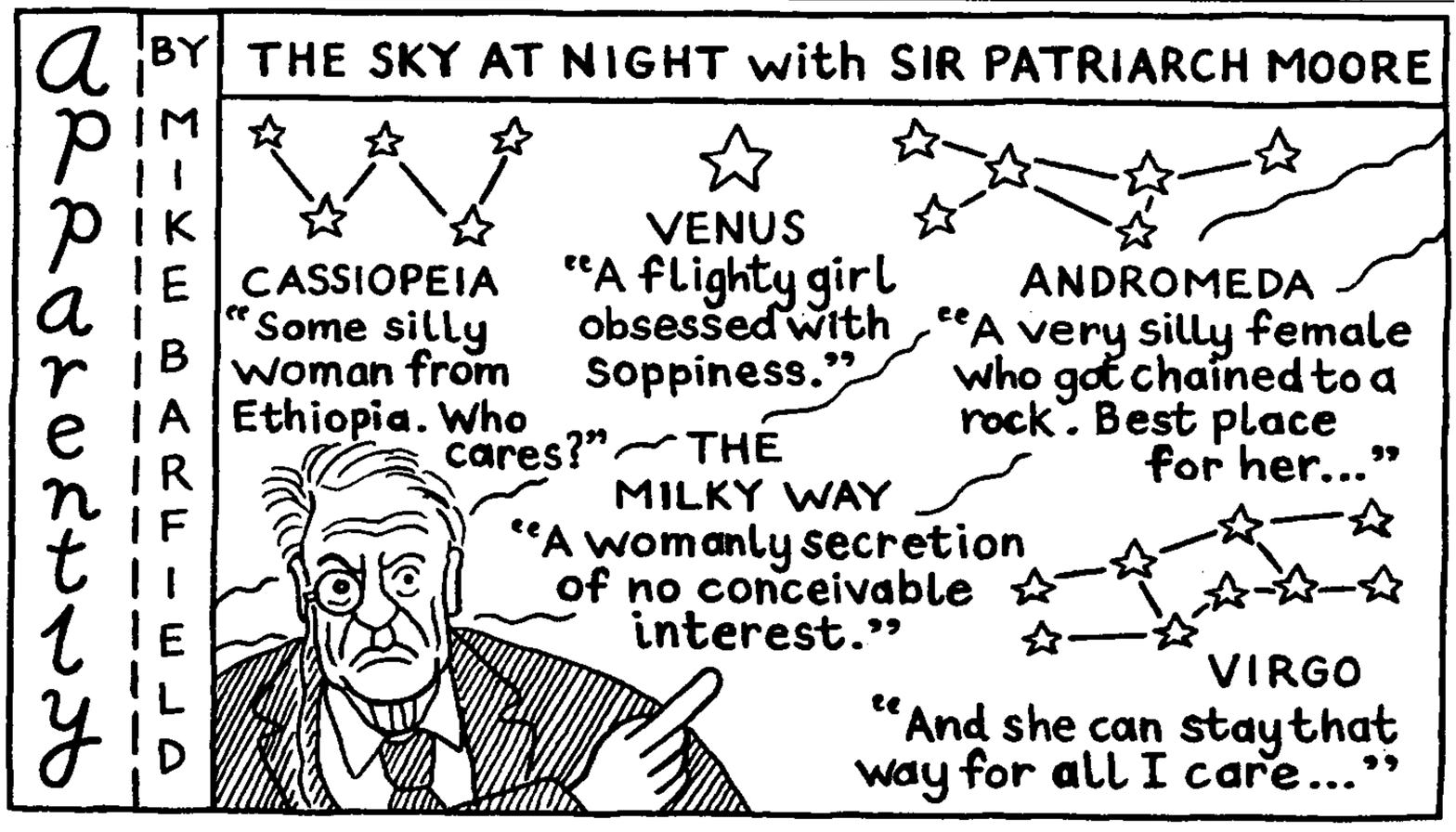
"Last September, we got permission to start up our own television station, 45 South, and I thought the same techniques could apply. The $20,000 cost of a commercial link was money we just didn't have, so we bought several woks instead, as a cheaper and more convenient



alternative. Now, pre-recorded clips from our studio are fed through a computer and beamed by wok to Cape Wanbrow, where they are relayed to television sets around North Otago. Our only serious technical problem was making the pole that the wok sits on high enough to clear the Kingsgate Brydone Hotel. We had to build it more than eight metres high, but now it's working fine, and one wok can provide the signal to the whole of Oamaru." *(New Zealand Herald, 22/2/07. Spotter: Tim Parker)*

PHILIP THOMPSON
1928-2007

Philip Thompson, long-time *Eye* cartoonist and illustrator of Funny Old World from 1993, died last week. His last drawing for us was approximately 6 weeks before his death.


apparently
BY MIKE BARFIELD
THE SKY AT NIGHT with SIR PATRIARCH MOORE
CASSIOPEIA
"Some silly woman from Ethiopia. Who cares?"
VENUS
"A flighty girl obsessed with soppiness."
THE MILKY WAY
"A womanly secretion of no conceivable interest."
ANDROMEDA
"A very silly female who got chained to a rock. Best place for her..."
VIRGO
"And she can stay that way for all I care..."

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL NEWSPAPERS

MADDY NO NEW DEVELOPMENTS AT ALL

There was nothing new to report today as the search continued for the missing toddler.

ON OTHER PAGES

● Where is she? We don't know **2**

● Is this man guilty? We don't know **3**

● What are the Portuguese police doing? We don't know **4**

● Is this every parent's worst nightmare? Yes **5**

PLUS

● More Pix, More Speculation, More Space-Filling **6-94**

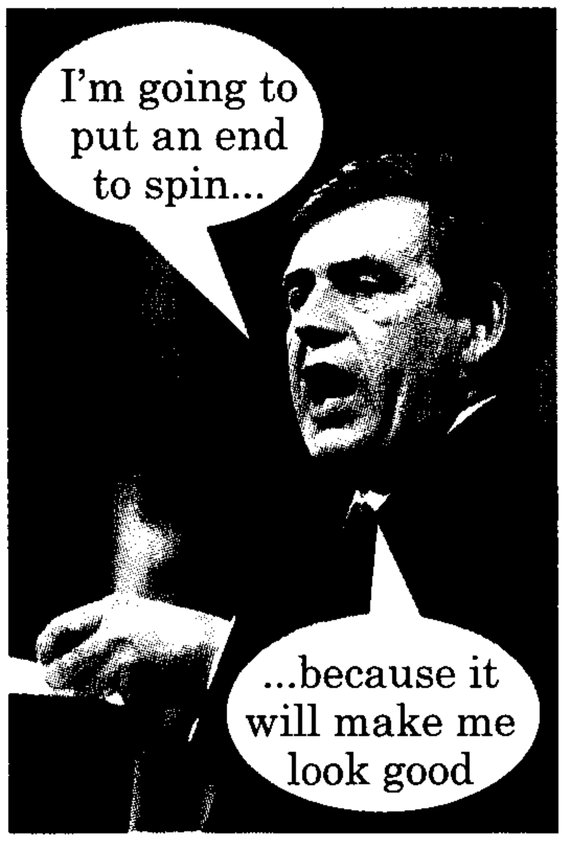
LATEST MEDIA OUTRAGE

"The Portuguese police need to get their priorities right and do more...

...more press conferences, more interviews, more gossip with journalists, more naming of suspects with no evidence"

ONE MINUTE SILENCE

There will today be a one-minute silence on all news channels during which the thousands of reporters covering the story of Madeleine will stop interviewing each other for sixty seconds.



GLENDA SLAGG

FLEET STREET'S 44D-CUP FINAL!!? GEDDIT? AND I AIN'T JOKING, MISTER!!!!

■ **HATS OFF to the new Wembley Stadium!?! Who said we Brits can't put on a pageant!!?! OK, so it was £560 billion over budget and should have been finished 20 years ago!?! Get over it!?!! On Saturday we showed the world that we can build the biggest and the best Soccer Mega-Mecca that has ever been or ever will be!?! Take it from me – I was there and as I looked out at the millions of fans singin' their hearts out I couldn't help sheddin' a little tear over the good news that football has finally come home!?!!?**

■ THE NEW Wembley!?!! What a dump?!! I've seen some jerry-built disasters in my time, Mister, but this Brit-built botch is the most overpriced, overdue, overrated lump of concrete since the Dome!?! And that's sayin' something!?!! As I looked out at the millions of fans queuing for the toilets and the £8 burgers and the £10 programme, I couldn't help sheddin' a little tear for the days of yore when football was about little lads with their dads a-cheerin' and a-peerin' from the stands at tuppence ha'penny for entry and three farthings for a pint o' tea?!! Forget football comin' home – in those days it had never gone away!?! *(What does this mean? Ed.)*

■ **TRUDI STYLER!!?! That's Sting's Missus!?! She's the wicked witch who sacked her cook because she wouldn't fly a thousand miles just to open a can of soup!!?! Talk about Lady Muck!!? Who do-do-de-da-da-da you think you are??!? (Geddit?!? It's a Sting-along!??!) Take a tip from top cook Gordon Ramsay – and f*** off!!?!!**

■ TRUDI STYLER!?!! Leave her alone, Mr Pressman!!?! Just cos the hired help refused to do her job, i.e. open a can of soup for Mr Sting's well-earned supper after a hard day playing the lute, why should she run a-whingein' and a-cringein' to the newspapers!?!! I've got a message for you, dearie, and it's *not* in a bottle?!! (Geddit?!??) F*** off!?!!

■ *HERE THEY ARE – Glenda's Midsummer Munchies!?!!*

● **Paul Wolfowitz.** OK, so you've been sacked from the World Bank!!?! Why not come round to my place for a World Bonk?!!? I've got a new position for you, Wolfie!??! Grrrrr!!!?

● **Jon Snow** – Channel Four's Mister Sex!!?! Here's a news item for you!?! "Top newsreader has secret black lover – more on that after the breakup!!?"

● **Nicolas Sarkozy** – France's new Grand Fromage!!??! Why not come round to my place, mon cher, and bring your Eiffel Tower with you!!?!! Ooh-la-la!!?!!

Byeeee!!!

TOP AWARD FOR AWARD SHOW

AT the BAFTA awards held in London last night the prestigious Bafta Award for Longest And Most Boring Award Ceremony went once again to the BAFTA awards. A host of celebrities in the London Palladium watched as TV's Graham Naughty gave himself the "Seems Like A Lifetime Award".

Other Awards

Most References To Masturbation in a Prime Time Chat Show
Jonathan Toss

GREEN EYE

No 94. Disposing of your old copies of Private Eye

Separate your magazines into three sections – jokes, journalism and cartoons. Then send them back to us and we'll use them again. Simple and easy! Planet saved!

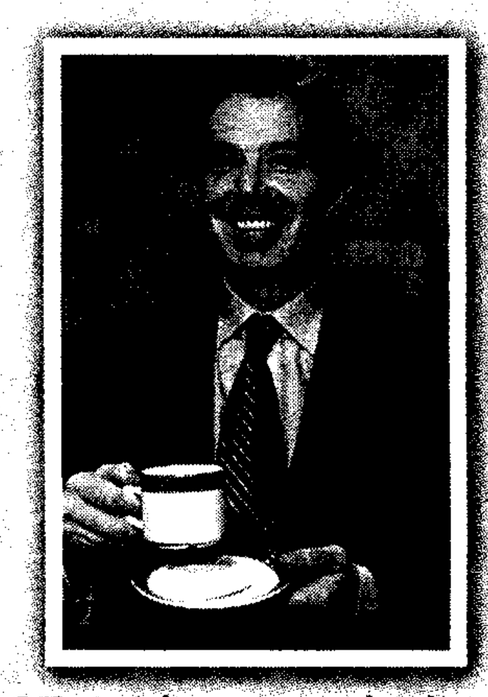
Next week: Burning the Guardian safely

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

To mark the official announcement of our vicar's forthcoming retirement we have assembled this pictorial tribute to the ten glorious years of Tony's time with us!

This will be something for every parishioner to cut out and keep, to remind future generations of the extraordinary golden age that we have all been privileged to share.

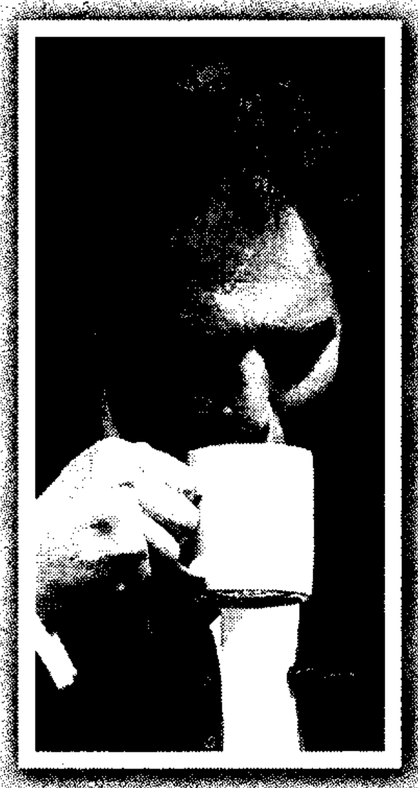


1997 As cheery crowds clustered round the vicarage to welcome their new vicar, Tony celebrates in his own quiet way!

1997 No one will ever forget Tony's amazing sermon on the death of Princess Diana. She may now be forgotten but his words will live on forever! "I am the People's Vicar" as he told us over a celebratory cup of tea.

1998 Tony has a consolatory cup of his favourite drink at our churchwarden Mr Mandelson's first farewell party (one of many!).

2000 Tony led us all in celebrating the dawn of a new era at the opening of the Millennium Tent (shortly to reopen as the Barbra Streisand Memorial Hall).

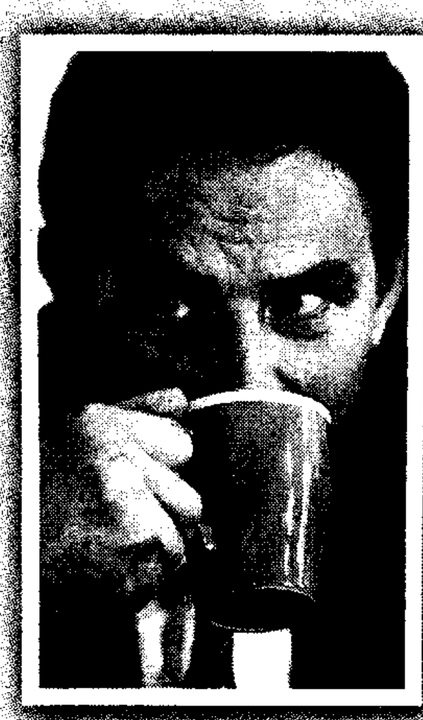


2001 Tony celebrates the re-opening of the footpath round the churchyard after the sad death of 10 million animals due to Foot and Mouth (no roast beef sandwiches on this occasion!).

2002 Tony offers tea and sympathy to the head of our Neighbourhood Watch, Mr Blunkett, after he'd been caught in bed with his American lady (he's still looking for someone to have his babies!).

2003 The vicar remains calm, even though we all had only '45 minutes to live' according to Mr Campbell ("That still leaves plenty of time to finish our tea," as Tony joked!).

2003 "There's nothing like a cup of tea when you've had bad news", as the vicar demonstrated after the funeral of our much-loved local GP, Dr David Kelly (or Dr Mitty as we affectionately knew him for his rather eccentric views about the great crusade against the Evil One!).

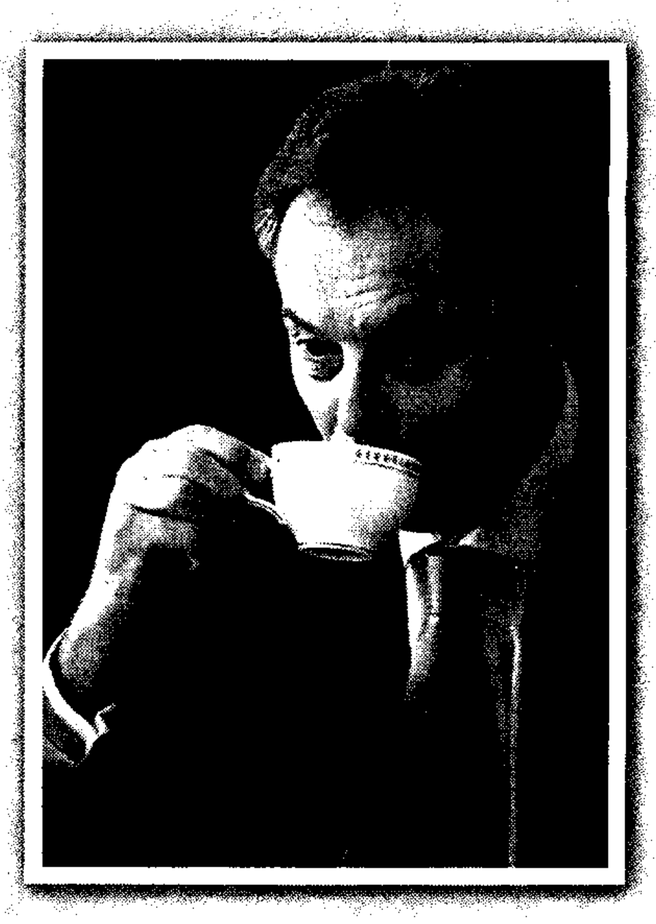


2004 What more appropriate way to celebrate the hanging of the Great Satan in Baghdad than a nice cup of tea? ("It's good noose," quipped the vicar, as he raised his cup to his friend the Rev. Dubya, of the Church of the Latter-Day Morons!).

2004 The vicar celebrates putting an end to the barbarous and evil practice of fox hunting ("Tally ho!" he said. "It's smoking next!")

2005 Another funeral! Was it poor Mrs Mowlem, who drank herself to death after imagining that she was more popular than the vicar? Was it our late organist, poor Mr Cook, who never recovered after his unhelpful criticisms of the vicar's sermon on Iraq? Or was it the funeral of Mrs Short (or hasn't that happened yet? It can't be far away!).

2005 The vicar celebrates the end of crime in the parish (now there's only poverty, Africa and global warming to go", as he told us!).



2006 Tea for two! The vicar salutes the parish's first 'civil parnership' ceremony, when Mr Smith 'married' his friend 'Mr Smith' in the St Albion's Registry Office ("I hope next time Chris ties the knot it'll be in church!" laughed the vicar over his tea and wedding cake).

2007 Time for one more cuppa (not 'copper', thank you PC Yates!) There are tears in every eye as the vicar announces that he is to leave the parish! At his farewell tea party the whole parish is so upset that no one turns up!

THE BROON-ITES
SCOTLAND'S FUNNIEST CARTOON!
Co-starring...
Yvette -I love balls- Cooper
Alistair -'Allo- Darling
and Ed Balls-up
At a pub in darkest Jockshire...
Good on yer Gordon!
It's a braw result yon scunner McDonnell no' getting the votes tae stand!
I ♥ BALLS
SMUG SMIRK
Ye'll be warming yer tootsies in Number Ten afore long!
JOCKSHIRE SPORT
SCOTTISH HAGGIS NURGLING TEAM THRASHED
JOCKSHIRE POST
BROON FER P.M.
This is braw, me chums! This means that instead o' wastin' seven weeks bangin' the heids o' the loony left...
JOCKSHI POST
BROON FER P.M.
...I can spend all that time presenting meself, ma policies and ma rosy personality tae the British public!
HENRY DAVIES
Helbmaboab and jings! Whit did I say?

TRIUMPH FOR BROWN AS HE DEFEATS NO ONE

by Our Political Staff **Peter O'Bore**

IN THE Labour Party's gripping leadership election, Gordon Brown romped home ahead of his rivals, of whom there were none.

In a thrilling finish, Brown fought off the non-existent challenge to pull off a result which everyone had predicted all along.

At Westminster, the news of Brown's landslide victory was greeted with gasps of boredom.

Said one insider, "It's really good to have a debate and to air the issues, which of course we didn't because everyone was too busy sucking up to Gordon in the hope of getting a job."

Right up to the last minute, the bookmakers were claiming that the race was "too close to call" and would "go right to the wire".

Gordon's odds of 3,000-1 on showed just how knife-edged the battle had become.

THOSE VOTES IN FULL

G. Brown 308
Nobody 0
No One 0
Others 0

Brown gain.
Swing to Brown 100 percent

LATE NEWS

BROWN LAUNCHES ELECTION CAMPAIGN

FOLLOWING his triumph, Mr Brown will now campaign across the nation for six weeks in his bid to become Leader of the Labour Party.

THAT BROWN CABINET – HOW IT WILL LOOK

Foreign Secretary: **G. Brown**

Home Secretary: **G. Brown**

All other posts: **G. Brown**

Chancellor of the Exchequer: **A. Darling**
(just in case the economy goes belly-up and he can be blamed)

ON OTHER PAGES: ■ Whither Jack Straw? **2** ■ Can Hewitt survive? **3** ■ Goodbye Mrs Beckett? **4** ■ Will Hazel Blears be the new Harriet Harman? **5** ■ Is anyone still reading this? **94**

"Right then, all agreed... bar one..."

The Daily Chain Mail

St Crispin's Day, The Year of Our Lord 1415 — 1 Groat

HARRY NOT TO GO TO AGINCOURT

by Lunchtime O'Bowsandarrows

THE British Army today ruled that it was "too dangerous" to send the young King Harry to fight at the battle of Agincourt.

The commanding officer General Bedford said that he had visited the site and declared that "the King would be an obvious target".

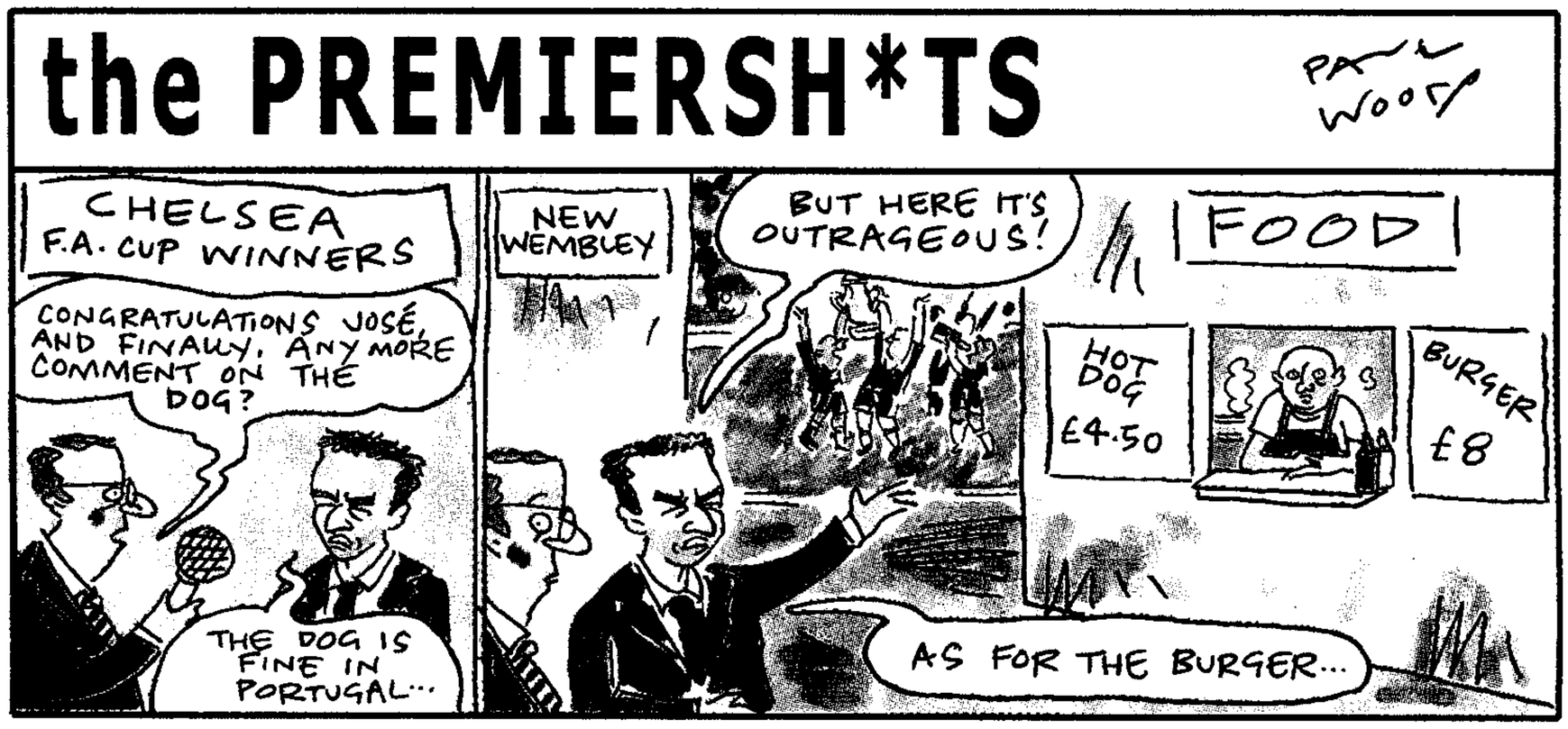
Knight Club

"With his distinctive armour and colourful Royal standard, he would attract the attention of French archers (Jeffroi d'Archole) and possibly endanger the troops around him."

The other Generals, Exeter, Warwick and Talbot, all agreed. "Harry might even be captured and held to ransom by the evil French," they said.

The King was said to be disappointed by the ruling, telling friends, "Once more unto the Boars Head, dear friends, once more".

INSIDE: Incredible Channel offer: Dover to Calais in only 14 hours!



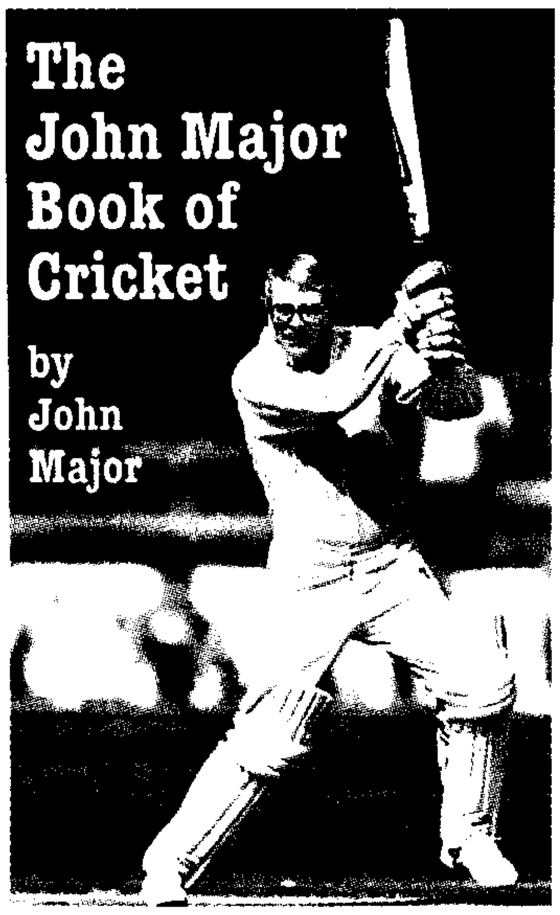
Home Office

NOTICE

The Home Office regrets that Mr Reid's leaving do has unfortunately been cancelled. The piss-up was originally due to take place in the brewery, but we failed to make the booking in time and then we forgot to send out any invitations. The piss-up has therefore been declared "unfit for purpose". Instead we are now planning two separate piss-ups in two different breweries. Please watch out for details of future cancellations.

BOOK OF THE WEEK

What You Missed



CHAPTER ONE
A Very English Game

EVER since I was a boy I have been not inconsiderably interested in cricket. Oh yes. In my judgement it is probably the most interesting game there is. As I said to my wife Norman this morning (obviously when this book is published it will be not inconsiderably later than this morning that I said it!), "There is something about cricket which makes it particularly interesting".

CHAPTER TWO
How I First Became Interested In Cricket

I FIRST became interested in cricket when I was quite young. I still remember the day when my older brother Terry went with me to choose my very first bat at Whiteleafs (not Disdale's, as Terry recorded wrongly in his book).

It was a "Jack Hobbs Three Star Special", named after a famous cricketer called Jack Hobbs, who played for Surrey, which was where I lived! Oh yes.

The bat had Mr Hobbs's signature on it, although it was not his real signature, as Terry took no small pleasure in telling me at repeated intervals.

In my judgement it was an extremely fine bat, and I wish I still had it.

I was not inconsiderably incandescent with rage when, many years later, I went to the attic to look for it and found it was no longer there because my wife Norman had given it to a bring-and-buy sale.

CHAPTER THREE
My First Visit To The Oval

I WILL never forget my first visit to the Oval, to see one of the great players of all time, Mr Cyril Washbrook, who many years later I was privileged to recommend for an honour to Her Majesty The Queen. It was a CBE which, as I rather humorously pointed out to my wife Norman, could stand for "Cyril Batted for England". "Isn't there an 'F' missing?", she asked, clearly failing to see the joke.

Sometimes women are not very good at cricket, or jokes for that matter!

After the match, in which Mr Washbrook made 31 before being caught at mid-off by Mr Sir Alec Bedser (or it may have been his twin brother Eric, it was difficult to tell them apart because they were twins!), we called our pet squirrel after Mr Washbrook, which is why he was known as 'Cyril the Squirrel' (and not 'Basil the Squirrel', as Terry claimed in his in no small measure poorly-researched book!).

CHAPTER FOUR
Cricket And My Years At Number 10 Downing Street

ONE of the things I most considerably regretted when I had the great privilege to become prime minister was that I did not have sufficient leisure time to pursue my interest in cricket.

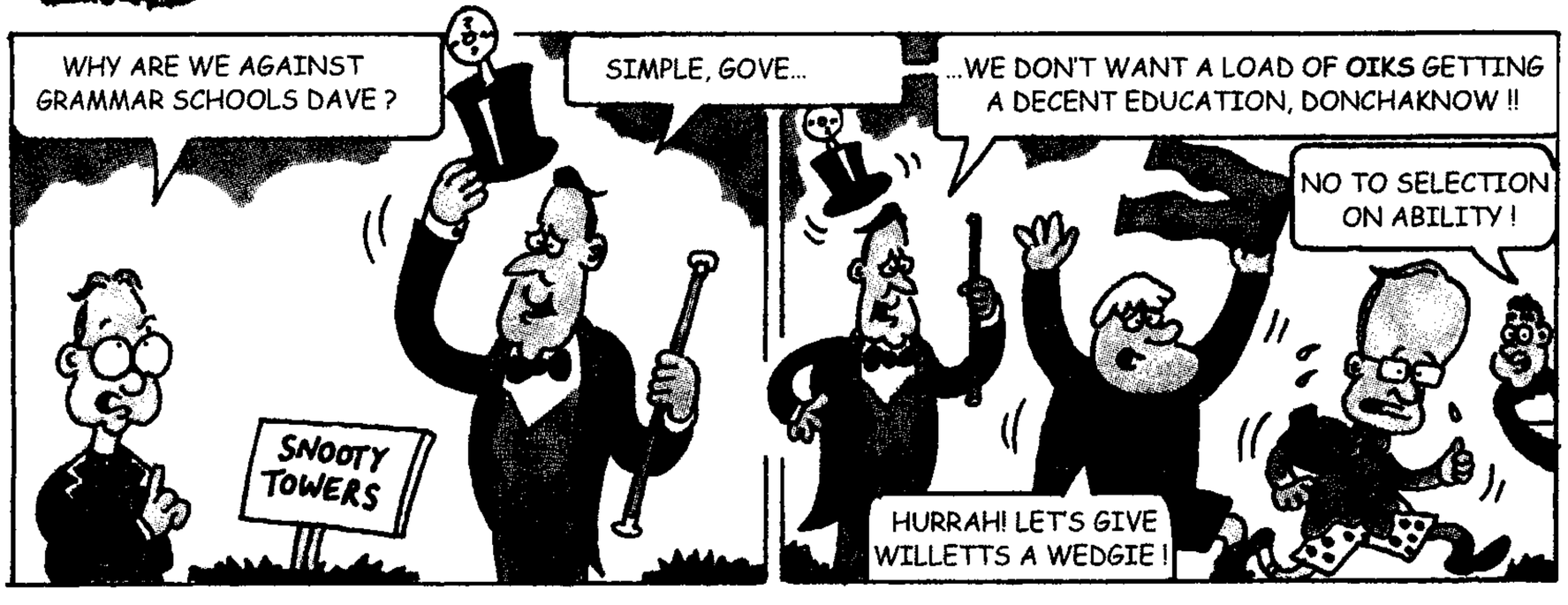
I once invited the famous French President Mr Monsieur Mitterand to accompany me to Lords to watch a test match, but he replied "non", which in my judgement was not inconsiderably rude of him!

CHAPTER FIVE
The Final Score

IN conclusion, I would like to conclude by saying that cricket has for many centuries been part and parcel of our English way of life. Oh yes, we think of cricket along with old maids drinking warm beer on their way to Communion in the fog... Neat rows of red and white traffic cones along our highways and byways... Love romps with Mrs Curry in the afternoon... (Who put this bit in? It has nothing to do with cricket whatsoever. I told the publishers that I did not want any mention of Mrs Curry in a book about cricket, but they have gone against my wishes, which makes me not inconsiderably very angry in no small measure indeed!)

● Listen to John Major reading extracts from his book on the new exclusive Eye podcast.

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS


WHY ARE WE AGAINST GRAMMAR SCHOOLS DAVE ?
SIMPLE, GOVE...
SNOOTY TOWERS
...WE DON'T WANT A LOAD OF OIKS GETTING A DECENT EDUCATION, DONCHAKNOW !!
NO TO SELECTION ON ABILITY !
HURRAH! LET'S GIVE WILLETTS A WEDGIE !

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

CHRIS TARRANT

Usually I save this question until the end, but under the circumstances I feel it appropriate to open the interview by asking: Has anything amusing ever happened to you involving a spoon?

No.

So you've never thrown a spoon at anyone in a curry house?

It was all a misunderstanding, some high-jinks that got out of hand.

I bet no-one has ever asked you this before. Are you a) Guilty, b) Not innocent, c) Bang to rights, d) A raspberry?

No comment.

Would you like to phone a friend? Or maybe your solicitor?

That's not funny.

Ow! You've just thrown a spoon at me.

No, I was just having some zany, madcap, Tiswas-style fun and you've got the wrong end of the stick.

It was a spoon actually. And it hurt.

Are you going to ask me whether I am a fan of spoons or not?

Of course. Do you have a big collection of spoons?

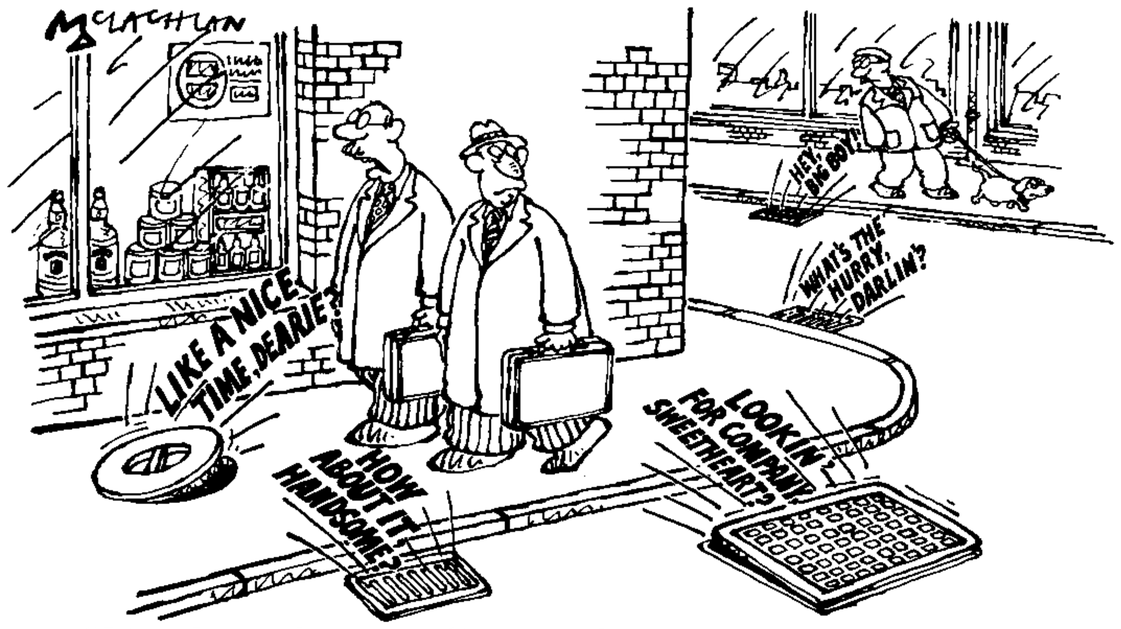
Yes, I'm a bit of a spoon nut and I have got loads of them.

Is your wife going to get them all? Or are you going to go fifty-fifty?

(Silence)

Ow! You've thrown another one at me.

(Sadly the interview had to be terminated at this point due to the arrival of the police.)



"I just knew the council's zero tolerance on street prostitution would drive it underground"

CHARLES NOT TO GO TO FRONT LINE

by Our Defence Staff **M. O'Dee**

THE QUEEN has decided that it would be too dangerous for her son Charles to be stationed in Buckingham Palace after her departure.

Although the Prince has made it clear that he wishes to take the post of King and serve his country "at the sharp end", the Queen believes that he would become a prime target for attacks

A royal insider said, "Snipers would have a field day as soon as Charles appeared. His silly dressing gown, his talking to plants and his wife jetting round the world creating a huge carbon footprint in the sky – it would all be too easy."

The Prince was last night said to be fuming at the Queen's decision to hold him back from where he feels his duty calls him to be.

"I didn't join the Royal Family just to sit on my arse back at Highgrove talking to tulips. It really is appalling."

Prince Charles is 94.

POLLY FILLER

WELL, what a surprise! MI5 has realised that women make better spies than men! This is not exactly news to those of us working mums whose job it is to know everything that's going on – from the secret location of their useless partner's missing sock to the Somalian for "You're fired, you silly girl, go back to what's left of your village!".

James Bond has got nothing on the average life-juggling über-mum: Ok, so he can drive an Aston Martin under water, but I can park a 4x4 in a disabled space right outside a North London prep school!

And maybe he can uncover the Mr Big who plans to take over the world, but I know who has been helping themselves to the chocolate biscuits in the cupboard (step forward Malnurishda from the Yemen – honestly, you would think on £1 a week, the greedy girl could buy her own?!).

SO what if 007 can turn off the death-ray machine that is going to blow up the world? I can turn off the Plasma TV when Simon is watching The World's Most Dangerous Trouser Presses with Richard Hammond on Sky Desperate Seven!

So, if 'M' is reading this, she(!) should know that if you want *intelligence*, then it's obvious that you recruit working women and not hopeless men !

Bond has a licence to kill! But Polly has a licence to fill (columns)!

The names Filler! Polly Filler!

© Polly Filler in all newspapers.

Highlights of the ANTIQUES ROADSHOW

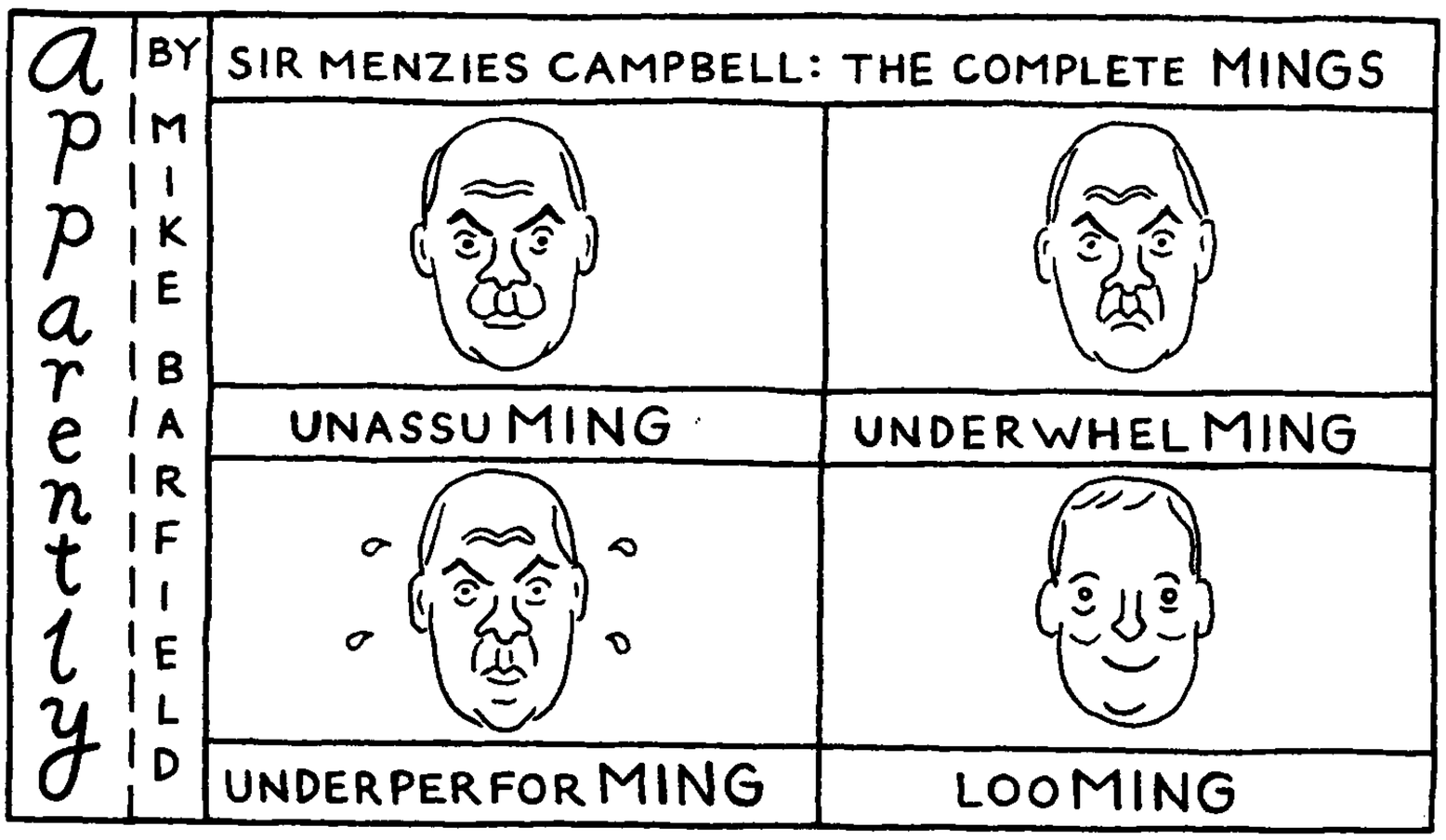
Expert in oriental antiquities: Now this is a rather extraordinary piece. You know what it is, of course?

Lemsip Opec *(for it is he, accompanied by giggling, young companion dressed in bikini)*: It's Ming, isn't it?

Expert: I'm afraid it is, and not in very good condition. May I ask how you came by it?

Opec: Well, we were getting a bit desperate. We found it in an old cupboard in the National Liberal Club. It was obviously very old and covered in dust, but we thought it might be worth something.

Expert: Well, I'm afraid it isn't. It's not worth anything at all. In fact, it's not even Chinese. It's just a poor Scottish copy. If I was you, I'd get rid of it as soon as you can.



GREAT CLASSICAL SPEECHES No. 94 Boris Marcus Antonius

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL PAPERS

TEN YEARS OF BLAIR

Where Did The Analysis Go Wrong?

IT STARTED off so promisingly, as we all opened our 'Ten Years of Blair' supplements, full of anticipation and optimism. This was going to be good – new, fresh and exciting! But very soon our hopes were dashed and disillusion set in.

This was just the same old stuff rehashed. Not a radical different type of supplement at all. But the usual, cynical run-of-the-mill scissors and paste job that we had come to expect with profiles of John Major and Margaret Thatcher.

Spin... sleaze... cronies... we'd read it all before. And by the time it came to the Iraq War, we knew that the whole thing was all going to end disappointingly. Sadly, it would remain unfinished by most readers who *(cont. p. 94)*

NEXT WEEK
Special Supplement
"Will The Brown Years Usher In A Fresh Exciting New Era Of Something To Write About?"

CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW

Prizewinning design: Traditional English Garden

Fayed v. Sanity (Day 94)

Before Mrs Justice Slosslecarrot

(The interlocutory proceedings continued today, as Counsel for Mr Fugger presented a list of witnesses he intended to call before the court)

Michael Largecheque Q.C. *(for Mr al-Fugger)*: I beg leave, My Lord Ladyship, to submit the names of the 758 witnesses whom my client, in all his lunacy, would wish to call, for no apparent reason. You will find the list in Bundle 94.

Judge Butler-Slosslecarrot: Mr Largecheque, I am having some difficulty finding the exact bundle of documents to which you refer. Is it in the first container-load, which hereinafter I shall refer to as 'Container A', or the second lorry-load, parked on a double yellow line in the Strand, which hereafter this court will refer to as 'B'?

Mr al-Fugger *(interrupting)*: I thought we'd got rid of this fuggin' old bag?

Judge Slosslecarrot: Kindly sit down, Mr Fugger, while I pursue my searches.

Largecheque: Would it help to expedite proceedings, Your Ladyship, if I was to read out the names in question?

Judge: I am indebted to you, Mr Largecheque.

Largecheque: And I am indebted to my client Mr Fugger for the third container-load full of money, hereinafter referred to as 'Container C', which he has given me in order to ensure that we can spin out proceedings for as long as possible, or what we lawyers call *in re perpetua*.

Fugger *(interrupting again)*: Speak fuggin' English, Largecheque, that's what I pay you for.

Judge: Mr Fugger, I will not warn you again. Any more interruptions of this nature and I will have to ask you to leave the court.

Fugger: I'm fuggin' sorry, Your Fuggin' Lordship.

Judge: Can we please return to the matter of the list? Who are these names that your client wishes to call, Mr Largecheque?

Largecheque: Indeed, Your Honour. I am happy to oblige. *(Reading)* "Mr Dirty Desmond, proprietor of the *Daily Express* newspaper. Mr Piers Moron, a very distinguished celebrity and friend of my client. Professor Uri Geller, Reader in Spoonistics at the University of the Paranormal, Uruguay. His Holiness the Pope. Dame Eliza Manningham-Butler, the former head of MI5. Commander James Bond, RN, late of MI6. Sir Roland Rat, the former Director-General of the BBC. The Chief Rabbi. The Chief Dalek. The late Rudolf Hess."

Judge: This list of yours is preposterous! You will be telling me next that you wish to call Her Majesty the Queen!

Largecheque: What uncanny prescience, Your Ladyship! Her Majesty's name is the very next one on the list. It is my client's contention that she lies at the very heart of this murky affair. You will hear new evidence that the Queen persuaded Mr Paul Burrell, the Royal butler, to drive a white Fiat Uno into that fateful tunnel on the night in question, thus engineering the fatal crash which had been so carefully planned by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, the counter-espionage organisation SMERSH, and Mr Darth Vader, in his capacity as Supreme Commander of the Imperial Forces on the Death Star Battleship Galactica.

Judge: Mr Largecheque, these are indeed somewhat controversial allegations which will require me to spend some time lying down in a darkened room, before I happily hand over this case to somebody else.

(The case continues)

Late News

BROWN SHOCK

GORDON Brown has insisted his pledge – to build five new eco-towns with hundreds of thousands of affordable homes after he becomes Prime Minister – is viable.

"The towns will be constructed from 100% recycled Labour pledges – such as the one to build five eco-towns with hundreds of thousands of affordable homes before the last election," said Gordon *(cont. p. 94)*

U.N. HORROR

THE U.N. has defended their controversial decision to allow Zimbabwe to chair their 'Commission on Sustainable Development'.

"Unfortunately the 'Commission For Starving your People into Submission Whilst Torturing Your Political Opponents' already had a chairman so we had to find something else for them to do," said a U.N. *(cont. p. 94)*

NAVY SHOCK AND HORROR

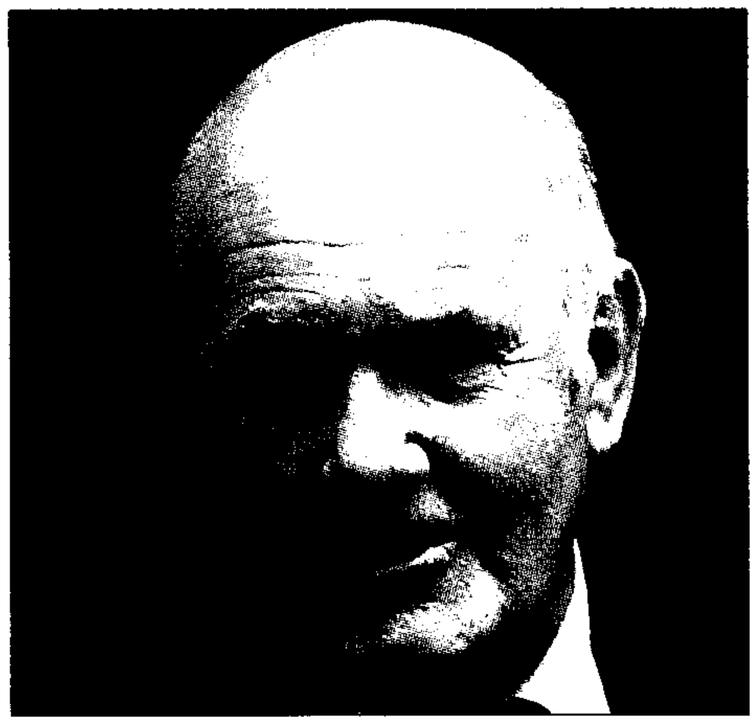
THE Royal Navy today confirmed that it was planning to get rid of all its ships as part of a cost-cutting drive.

"These ships are a major drain on Navy resources and can no longer be justified given the stringent cost-cutting measures required by the Government," said Admiral *(cont. p. 94)*

BLAIR TO BECOME POPE

(surely 'Catholic'? Ed)

DIARY



JOHN REID IN RETIREMENT

Retirement beckons. Time for some well-earned rest and relaxation, I inform my local butcher, as I pop by for my Scotch Egg.

"No rest for the wicked!" he says. And with that he laughs. In my face.

"Pardon me?" I say. I do not like his insinuation.

To my astonishment, he repeats the calumny: "No rest for the wicked!" he says.

"How dare you?" I say. It is a very serious allegation indeed, and one that I do not intend to let pass.

Luckily, I am a calm man. I take a deep breath, and gather myself. "On what possible grounds are you alleging that I am – your word, not mine – WICKED?" I ask him.

"It's just an expression," he says, pathetically.

"An expression of the very gravest discourtesy," I tell him. By now I am spitting with rage. "Are you questioning my integrity? Are you? Is that what you're doing? Is it? Well, IS IT?"

On the strength of my remonstration, the butcher retreats from his previous position, stages a complete climbdown and issues a formal apology not only to myself but also to my known associates. And that is as it should be. I am not a man to let wounds fester, no matter how deep and painful they may be. So without further ado, I pick up my Scotch Egg and depart.

As I stroll along the High Street, I ponder the long-term implications. Does this butcher possess all the requisite licences for the selling of raw and processed meats? Regrettably, there is a very real threat of disease and, I am sorry to say, lingering and painful death, from meat items purveyed by the wrong hands. So it is up to each of us in the wider community to be on our guard against unlicensed Scotch Eggs, and to alert the relevant authorities should we come across anything that arouses our suspicions.

I halt in the street for the express purpose of searching my Scotch Egg for circumstantial evidence that could lead to a possible arrest and conviction. As I am doing so, I am interrupted by our local vicar.

"How are you?" he asks.

"I can assure you I am perfectly well," I reply. "But let's get one thing perfectly straight. Just because you have a posh lah-di-dah public school accent that does not give you the right to corner me on the street and harass me with your questions. And let me ask you this, Reverend: are you now or have you ever been linked to the al Qaeda terrorist network?"

The man insists that he is not. Whether he is lying through his teeth is a matter for the relevant authorities to determine. That is all I have to say on the matter until further notice.

I decide to consume my Scotch Egg in the park. As I am rounding the corner towards the park gates, I spot a youth lurking. He is whistling a tune, using his bare lips in a threatening way. I get up close to him and offer him a piece of my mind.

"Ordinary law-abiding citizens have had quite enough of all this hideous whistling," I tell him. "At best it is an irritation, at worst a call to indiscriminate hooliganism leading to senseless destruction and possibly serious injury. All our researches into the matter tell us that whistling can lead to worse, including murder."

The youth stops whistling, in order to remonstrate.

I interrupt on behalf of all responsible mums and dads. "There is no excuse for this type of anti-social behaviour!" I correct him. I vow then and there to do everything in my power to promote WhistleWatch, the government-supported agency leading a long overdue crackdown on underage whistling.

By the end of this year, our intention is to have sound-sensitive whistle-scanners installed on every street corner and park in this country. Youth Whistling is the enemy at our gate. If we fail to stamp it out now, then I kid you not, we shall be reaping the whistling whirlwind for months – if not years – to come.

I enter the park in question. A time to relax in the sunshine and take stock of all threats. Grass everywhere. Flowers all around. Even ducks are in evidence.

I summon an attendant. "This grass is home to worms," I inform him. "Furthermore, research tells us that these flowers may well be harbouring hard drugs. And how can you be sure these ducks with their beaks and their wings are not carrying lethal diseases? Take it from me, chum: THIS PARK IS NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE."

My acquaintances will tell you that I have always been a very hands-on sort of guy. I do not ask others to do what I will not do myself. That is not my way. I am happy to get my hands dirty. So I get down on my knees and start pulling up all the plants on behalf of ordinary decent mums and dads everywhere.

By this time, my good colleagues from the local TV news programme have arrived. "So you got my call!" I comment to the female presenter. I had considered it my bounden duty as a responsible citizen to "tip them off" before embarking upon my plant-pulling duties.

"Unfortunately, these plants constitute a very real threat to the community" I add. "I've received a literally huge number of calls from people all over the country begging me to do something about not only their stems but also the threat from their petals."

Flowers are a luxury we can ill-afford under the present international climate. And so, to my great regret, are golf courses. There are, however, plenty of other ways to take exercise, including running on the spot. After digesting my Scotch Egg, I proceed with due caution to the local golf course. In the rear of my vehicle, I always carry a concrete mixer, just in case. Sure enough, the time has come to fill in all 18 holes. As you know full well, they may be harbouring very real threats from foreign bodies, the majority lethal, or so the experts inform me. Retirement, I reflect, is a tough business. But someone's got to do it.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER

THIS STORY ABOUT ALLEGATIONS THAT STING AND TRUDIE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST THEIR CHEF IS VERY UNFORTUNATE...
LAST THING YOU NEED IS A STORY LIKE THAT...
SHE CLAIMS THAT SHE WAS SACKED FROM HER ¥28,000-A-YEAR JOB BECAUSE SHE WAS PREGNANT..
THEY'VE OBVIOUSLY DENIED IT...
BUT WHETHER IT'S TRUE OR NOT, THE DAMAGE HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE, HASN'T IT?
AFRAID SO.
CHEF WANTS A PAY RISE. 28K OR HE'S WALKING, HE SAYS.
BLOODY STING AND TRUDIE!

Literary Review

Snooker balls

The Post-Birthday World

Lionel Shriver

(HarperCollins, £15)

MISS S here has been out on the publicity trail a bit of late. In one recent interview she confirmed that the topic of her next novel would be death and dereliction and the *Daily Mail* book club could jolly well go hang. In another she wondered whether it was time to stop trading on her looks, about which it would be ungallant to make any comment at all. And a *Telegraph* essay – Miss S reviews a lot for the *Telegraph*, and chewed up Graham Swift there only the other month – lamented the critical fate awaiting novelists who make the mistake of trashing their professional rivals. Put them together and what have you got? At the very least, a writer who wants to be taken *very seriously indeed*.

And why not? Lionel's last one (Lionel!), the stratospherically successful *We Need To Talk About Kevin*, won the Orange Prize back in 2005. Among the plaudits for this epistolary look-back from a vexed American mother whose teenage son has murdered seven of his classmates in a high-school shooting spree, came a murmur or two to the effect that it rather lacked human warmth. And now in its wake, presaged by a high-profile change of publisher, waddles the six hundred groaning pages of *The Post-Birthday World*, in which mass homicide is exchanged for the old *Sliding Doors* routine of twin variations on the fall-out from a single life-changing decision.

Fortysomething children's book illustrator Irina, whose Russian badinage her creator sometimes forgets to translate, lives in London with her long-term shack-up Lawrence, a somewhat diffident character who labours for a think-tank, is keen on snooker and pines for his nightly stake-out in front of *Late Review*. The sex is OK, except he likes it doggy style and won't kiss her.

Then comes the fateful night in July 1997 when Irina ends up snogging a champion snooker player with the faintly implausible name of Ramsey Acton, with whom she does or doesn't' decamp depending which side of the mirror you happen to be on.

Cue – no pun intended – several hundred thousand words of carefully skewed symmetry, in which Irina goes to the UK snooker championships as Ramsey's mistress *and* as his interested friend, marries him *and* sticks with Mr Think-tank, gets pregnant by him only to lose the baby *and* finds out about Lawrence's low sperm-count, watches him go bankrupt and get prostate cancer *and* uncovers Lawrence's affair with office bimbo Bethany. Princess Diana's memorial rites and 9/11 come and go, but Irina cruises on, desperate for sex and the personal fulfilment that is its accompanying gloss.

All this, happily enough, is very funny – not perhaps intentionally so, but then we should take comedy where we find it. Funniest of all is randy Ramsey, whose idiom Shriver cobbles together out of such geographically dispersed components as stage-cockney ("rabbit" for "talk"), northern prole ("pet", "summat" etc) and west country yokel ("were" for "was"), who talks about "buff birds strutting their stuff on the pavements", sternly informs his squeeze that "a lady like you got no business on the tube", and is, frankly, a scream.

Following close behind Ramsey is the portentousness, much of which concerns him, as when Shriver writes of his naked form that "stripped, he strode their hotel room like a creature in its natural environment, and no more called out for cladding than a stag in the woods." Gosh!

And then, of course, there is Shriver's ominous tendency to overdo things. Interminable accounts of snooker matches, whose technical accuracy TV's Mr Clive Everton has already called into question. Endless shopping lists and dinner menus. Four whole pages on Irina's beetle-browed attempts to masturbate one lonely afternoon in her flat. What really irks, though, is not the overblown prolixity but the absolute lowness of the moral and emotional tone, in which everything is solemnly reduced to the level of enormous dicks and gutless hedonism.

Going back to the prolixity, how on earth did *The Post-Birthday World* get past its editor in the Fulham Palace Road? Well, HarperCollins paid a mint for it and Miss S is a tough baby, so I expect it was simply that nobody dared complain.

LIBRARY NEWS

■ WHATEVER possessed those responsible for naming the University of Sheffield's spanking new £23m library? Libraries apparently can't be called libraries these days, so the new seven-storey building is to be known as the "Information Commons".

"It's a new name expressing an old concept of community," explains the university's marketing team. "Since the middle ages the word 'commons' has meant a shared resource."

However, unlike the university's other libraries, entry to this one is limited to the institution's own students and staff. Ordinary residents of Sheffield are strictly forbidden to enter the "commons" and even temporary staff and visiting researchers from other universities are banned.

Perhaps they should simply have called it an Information Enclosure.

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ ANDREW MOTION's *Guardian* review of Peter Stanford's life of Cecil Day-Lewis rewarded the kind of attention normally only given to poetry.

A good-looking, poshly-educated writer who failed to "find a convincingly original voice" and whose "stock is low" as a poet; who "spent a great deal of his adult life criss-crossing the boundaries of marriage" and so "caused a great deal of misery to those closest to him" – regulars on the poetry scene, and student of creative writing who were at UEA in the 90s, have noticed parallels with another libidinous poet laureate with a flair for getting appointed to agreeable establishment posts. Who on earth could they mean?

■ CRITICS have been gasping at the precocity of Ben Wilson, whose book *Decency and Disorder* has just been issued by Faber – and who was named by Waterstone's last week as one of the 25 authors who'll be the biggest stars of the next quarter of a century.

"The startling thing about *Decency and Disorder* is to learn from the dust-jacket that Wilson has written it, his second book, in his mid-twenties," Blair Worden wrote in the *Spectator*. "He has absorbed a huge array of material."

But much of this material – as well as the book's themes, narrative and argument – may seem oddly familiar to anyone who read Vic Gatrell's *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London*, published by Atlantic Books last year.

Gatrell's subject, like Wilson's, was the shift from the boisterous and bawdy humour of the mid-18th century to the respectable sobriety of the 1820s. The final section of Gatrell's book was called "The Age of Cant". No previous historian of the era had used this phrase (derived from Byron's complaint that "cant is so much stronger than cunt") to describe the cultural shift in the period. But now it also crops up in Wilson's subtitle: *The Age of Cant, 1789-1837*

Coincidence? Er, perhaps not. Six years ago, as a Cambridge history undergraduate, Ben Wilson took as his special subject a course on English satirical prints between 1730 and 1840 – a course taught by none other than Prof Vic Gatrell, who was already working on the book that would become *City of Laughter*. As Wilson acknowledged in his first book (a study of satirist William Hone), he benefited immeasurably from Gatrell's teaching. Just how much he benefited is only now apparent.

Gatrell gave the students compendious handouts based on his 18 weekly two-hour presentations. Two of the bulkiest were titled "The Age of Cant: The Reformation of Manners and the Domestication of Humour, c. 1790–c.1840". He also shared with his students the original sources and comic prints he had unearthed in his research. Although many of these are used in *Decency and Disorder*, Wilson implies that he discovered them all himself: the book contains not the slightest acknowledgement of Vic Gatrell or any previous historian in the field.

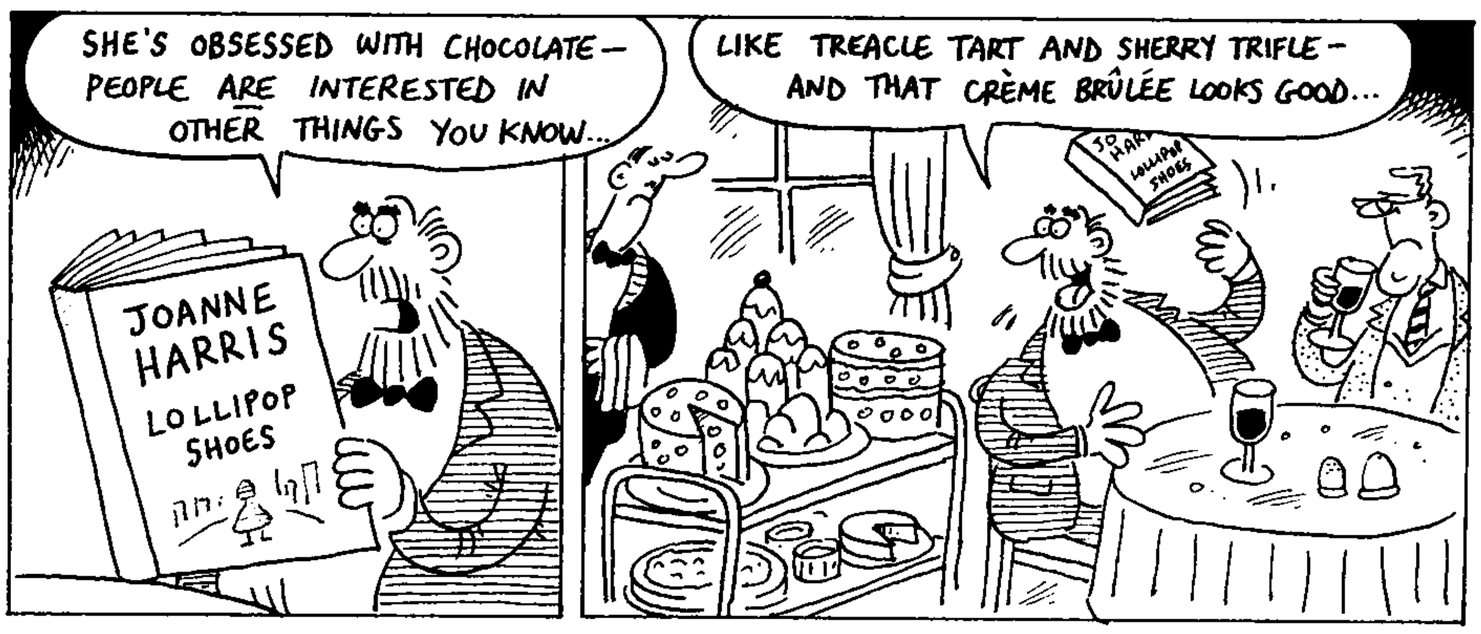
Ben Wilson's publishers at Faber describe his failure to mention Gatrell as "a genuine oversight". A likely story. He's a clever and plausible young fellow; but the next time he puts up an idea for a book, they should first ask him where he got it from.

■ AS Waterstone's celebrated its 25th anniversary with a big party, staff at 311 Oxford Street were not so joyful. The store is to close this week with the loss of around 20 jobs.

Closure comes less than three years after a huge opening fanfare heralding it as the chain's new flagship store.

The original decision to open was a cause of much argument between then HMV Group CEO Alan Giles and chief operating

Literary Review continues overleaf


SHE'S OBSESSED WITH CHOCOLATE – PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED IN OTHER THINGS YOU KNOW...
JOANNE HARRIS
LOLLIPOP SHOES
LIKE TREACLE TART AND SHERRY TRIFLE – AND THAT CRÈME BRÛLÉE LOOKS GOOD...
JO HARRIS LOLLIPOP SHOES

officer Brian McLaughlin. Giles was vocally opposed to the purchase and when the store underperformed, McLaughlin piled the pressure on Waterstone's management, forcing them to spend tens of thousands on promotion and marketing.

This will be the eighth Waterstone's store to close this year, with more closures planned.

■ INDEPENDENT publisher Snowbooks was delighted to receive a call from a BBC News 24 researcher recently. The station was planning a feature on the stress of everyday life and wanted to interview the author of *The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow* on air.

With regret Snowbooks informed the researcher that the author in question, Jerome K. Jerome, died in 1927.

'Bookworm'

THEATRE NEWS

CRITICS rounded on National Theatre artistic director Nicholas Hytner for his declaration that too many of them were too old, but one of their number has proved him right.

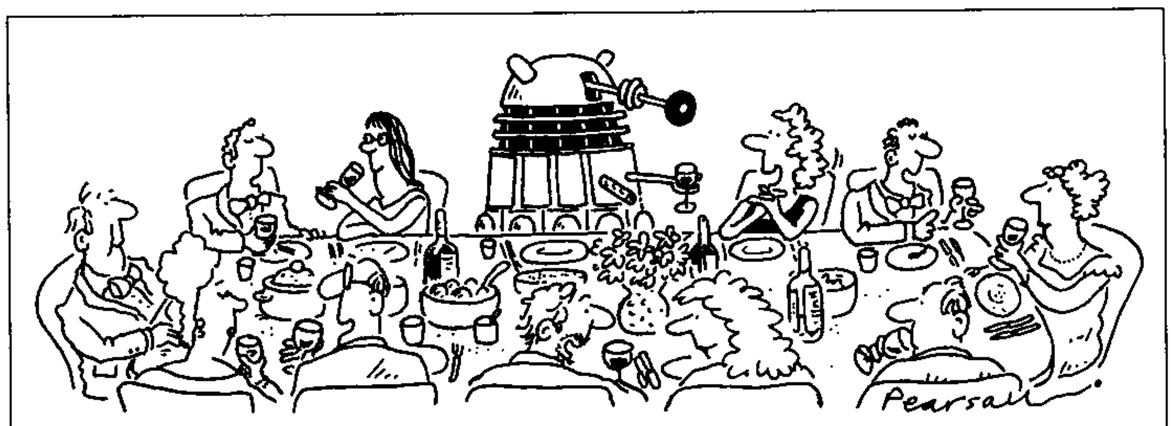
In the *Sunday Telegraph* of 20 May, Robert Gore-Langton's unfavourable review of Philip Ridley's *Leaves of Glass* at the Soho Theatre ended with the following complaint: "It's also two hours long without an interval. Who do these theatre folk think we are – men or camels? I came out hot, parched and unrelieved."

Two hours too long to sit without a drink or wee? Clearly, Gore-Langton can be no fan of the cinema. But is it fair for theatre actors, directors and playwrights to know their weeks or months or years of work will be viewed unsympathetically because they breach the limits of Gore-Langton's throat and bladder?

To uphold the honour of the profession, perhaps this critic should excuse himself from any plays without an interval… or perhaps the management should hand him, along with his ticket and programme, a full bottle and an empty one.

THEATRE impresario Bill Kenwright, notorious for complaining to newspaper editors when their critics fail to gush sufficiently about his pisspoor shows, has been up to his old tricks again.

Daily Express editor Peter Hill has just been handed a detailed memo of all that is wrong with his newspaper's theatre coverage and how it might be improved (ie by giving more space to plug West End shows). The author of this scholastic assessment? None other than one W. Kenwright, theatre producer and all-round editorial genius.



"Gosh, how thrilling – what would I have seen you in?"

Rather than bother trying to charm the infamously blunt Hill, Kenwright turned his attention to Dirty Desmond's sidekick Paul Ashford and detained him over a long, conspiratorial lunch. The following day he sent Ashford his memo about how the *Express* could improve its coverage.

Shortly after the memo arrived, Kenwright's latest production, *The Letter*, opened at Wyndham's Theatre. By happy coincidence the *Express*'s bow-tied theatre critic Paul Callan found the show (panned by some other critics as woefully old-fashioned) greatly to his liking.

HIS Highness Sheikh Dr Sultan Bin Mohammad Al-Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council of the United Arab Emirates, Ruler of the Emirate of Sharjah, has penned a riveting "World Theatre Day Message 2007".

To reprint the full magnificence of his declaration would fill numerous columns; but as the following extract shows, the sheikh is living proof that the Arab world has found its Kenneth Branagh, its Larry Olivier and its EJ Thribb rolled into one.

"Oh Theatre People, it is almost as if we have been struck by a storm and overwhelmed by the dust of doubt and suspicion which is approaching us.

"Visibility has become almost eclipsed and our voices shrill and barely audible in the clamour and division intent on keeping us far apart from one another. In fact, were it not for our deep-rooted belief in dialogue so uniquely manifested by such art forms as the theatre, we would have been swept away by the storm which leaves no stone unturned..."

And so interminably on.

Private Eye's Worstseller Chart

Position	Author	Title	Publisher	Reported advance	Sales to date	Cost of advance per book	Copies needed to sell to make back advance
1	Gavin Mortimer	*The Longest Night*	Weidenfeld & Nicolson	£125,000	2,592	£48.23	77,639
2	Mike Lawson	*The Inside Ring*	HarperCollins	£125,000	2,979	£41.96	164,473
3	Donovan	*The Hurdy Gurdy Man*	Random House	£50,000	5,478	£9.13	31,645
4	Sheila Quigley	*Bad Moon Rising*	Random House	£150,000	32,751	£4.58	267,857
5	Status Quo	*XS All Areas*	Sidgwick & Jackson	£125,000	41,412	£3.02	84,459

Notes: Advances as reported at www.publishersmarketplace.com which is where publishers and agents report their own deals. Sales to date are correct as of today on Nielsen Bookscan's official chart data site. Sheila Quigley signed a £300k two book deal. Bad Moon Rising was the second book in that deal.

Pseuds Corner

Tamar Yoseloff's poems often thread their way across the page like the scattered tracks of a shy animal in the snow…

From the East Riding Literary Events Guide

Make no mistake, the Fat Duck is an extraordinary, fabulous restaurant. When I ate there, [Heston] Blumenthal tested a new dish on us which involved one person holding a microphone to their mouth while eating a chewy morsel. Meanwhile, the rest of the table donned recording headphones so we could hear them masticating in all its amplified glory.

MATT BORN, *Daily Telegraph*

Becoming Animal are a group of organisms who create sound in collaboration with, in this instance, an arctic fox, a black vulture, a pot-bellied pig, an eagle owl, a Canada goose, a turkey, a seagull and a number of non-specific birds inhabiting a Worcestershire woodland.

From the website of the London experimental nightclub Immersion

"There's a tremendous tension between people projecting and wanting to get into her skin and indeed, now into her very clothes, and the idea that somehow this doesn't go with equality, this is feudal, this is some hierarchical world that we shouldn't be part of. We want to actually take hold of her, rub her out, eliminate her... She also has a certain expression which I think has become an expression of our time – her lips half parted, her eyes have a look fixed on the distance, a kind of landscape where we can lose ourselves. Andy Warhol, who has risen to be the most expensive artist of the 20th century, specialised in icons – he cultivated vacancy in himself. He said he wanted to have written on his gravestone 'here lies a figment', and I think that Kate Moss has really understood that unconsciously."

PROFESSOR MARINA WARNER, Today Programme, Radio 4

Her reconnection to world events in part began on Boxing Day 2005. Following the tsunami in Indonesia, Bjork recorded an album of fans' remixes of her single Army of Me, donating the proceeds to Unicef. A year later, she was invited to visit the region and found 'they were still just digging in the earth and finding bones and dresses of relatives', an image that you suspect might have occasioned her desire for the dirty sound of the clavichord.

She flew from Indonesia straight to New York, to a studio session with the producer Timbaland, and immediately wrote the song Earth Intruders. 'It just came like a tsunami out of my mouth,' she says, sounding still faintly surprised, 'and lyrically it's probably the most chaotic song that I've ever written, it sort of doesn't make sense.' It is a marching song, 'Bundle of bombardiers,' it insists. 'We are the canoneers/Apache voodoo'…[*continues*]

LAURA BARTON interviews BJORK, *Guardian*

CONTRIBUTORS: Patricia Hammond, Jenny Dyson, John Marsh, Simon Heartfield, Strobes.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

BLAIR AND IRAQ

Franks for the memories

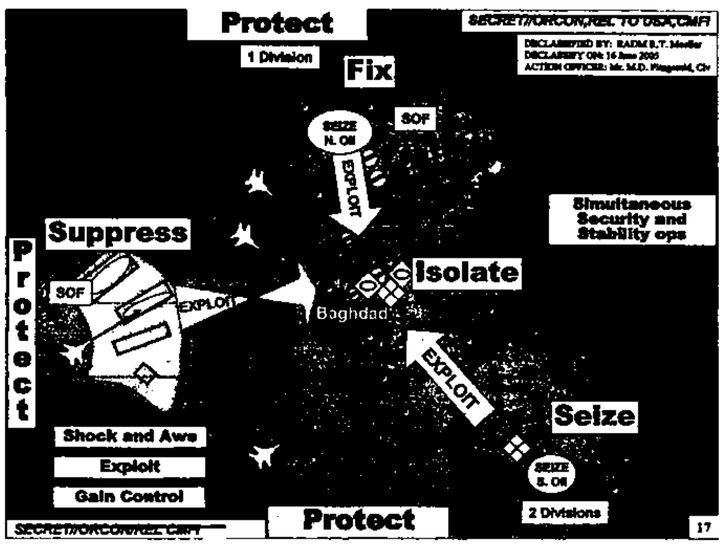
BRITISH forces were included in the United States' plans to invade Iraq as long ago as December 2001, according to PowerPoint slides US General Tommy Franks presented to the then US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld and President George Bush.

The use of UK forces was mooted in early drafts of "Operation Polo Step", the code name for the planned invasion of Iraq prepared for President Bush after the 9/11 attacks. By August 2002, these specified the use of the British SAS and Royal Air Force, suggesting the UK government was committed to Bush's war long before Tony Blair had backed the plan publicly.

American researchers at the National Security Archive made a "Freedom of Information" request for papers concerning internal debates about the number of troops that would be needed to invade Iraq, and they were given the de-classified slides earlier this year.

One of the first sets of slides, presented to Rumsfeld, Bush and US vice-president Dick Cheney in December 2001, show three possible war plans – "Robust", "Reduced" and "Unilateral", reflecting different levels of international support for war against Saddam. A "robust" coalition would allow the US to make one big "simultaneous attack", but a "unilateral" intervention would force the Americans to use smaller "sequential" attacks.

Franks offered three tables showing various countries' possible involvement. The tables covered Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey and the UK. Every country save Britain was a border state or nearby. Only the UK, Jordan and Turkey were marked as providing troops in the "Robust" coalition, the other nations supplying bases or allowing "overflight". Only Britain was expected to definitely supply troops in the "reduced" coalition. And even if the US had taken "unilateral" action, the UK was still expected



to offer "some support" from its "armed forces".

These war plans chime neatly with the leaked "Downing Street memo", a record of Tony Blair's meeting with his chiefs of staff from July 2002, in which the British government said: "We should work on the assumption that the UK would take part in any military action" even though "the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy". The memo also discussed possible strategies which closely matched the jargon of Franks' battle plans.

Though Franks' first plans may have speculated about the UK's involvement in the war, he seems to have been confident of Britain's support. Indeed, by August 2002 when Franks gave his next PowerPoint presentation to President Bush, it appears Tony Blair had communicated his intention to join the attack. A "full force disposition" lists all the troops to be involved; and the detailed map includes, alongside many US army divisions and planes, a role for "UK SOF Forces" (special operations forces) based in Diyarkabir, Turkey; "SAS Task GRP (UK)" and "5 RAF Harrier Squadron" based in Al Jafra, Jordan, "1 x RAF Tornado Squadron" and "5 x RAF C130 Squadron" based in Kuwait.

The slides strongly suggest that British military planners were already helping the Americans draw up their attack at a time when Prime Minister Blair said no decision had yet been made. According to the next slide (pictured), British troops would be involved in activities labelled on a map of Iraq with arrows reading "SEIZE N. OIL", "SEIZE S. OIL", "SUPPRESS", "EXPLOIT" and "ISOLATE", all above the heading "SHOCK AND AWE". Ultimately there was one major change to Franks' plan, thanks to a parliamentary revolt. While Britain remained on board, Turkish MPs forced the US to abandon a northern assault on Iraq through their territory.

GOVERNMENT WASTE

Bourn again

HOW does the head of the National Audit Office (NAO), whose job is to root out government waste, run up six-figure annual travel expenses (see last *Eye*)? Partly, the *Eye* has learnt, by touring the world's finest hotels – which ministers and officials would never be allowed to stay in as it would be, er, too wasteful.

After some nagging the NAO has revealed where Sir John Bourn (pictured) stays on his many trips (51 in the last three years; 43 of them abroad, of which 22 were with his wife). Wherever the Bourns go, it emerges, they stay in the most sumptuous style possible.

Among the couple's city-breaks were three nights in May last year at the Astoria in St Petersburg – Russia's leading hotel, according to industry awards, and £400 a night for the cheapest double room. Other jaunts for the pampered pair included three nights in December 2004 at the luxurious San Regis just off the Champs Elysées in Paris, where a double room is more than £300 a night, and a week that October at the Gresham Palace overlooking the Danube in Budapest (£270 for 24 hours).

This extravagant pattern was repeated over the three years the *Eye* has investigated (never mind Sir John's previous 16 in the job): the best joint in town rather than the usual sub-£100 business grade hotel other public servants are restricted to.

The palatial establishments the Bourns choose are always in the swankiest part of town, too – ideal for the top restaurants Sir John is known to favour and the shopping that she does while hubby is in meetings.

On UK business, without Lady B, Sir John doesn't scrimp either. Overnight in Belfast last year he stayed at the Culloden Estate and Spa, "Northern Ireland's most prestigious 5 star hotel" – (£200 a night before you order room service). In Edinburgh he picked the 5 star Balmoral, for which the taxpayer wouldn't have seen change from £300. By way of comparison, the most senior civil servant would be allowed to spend up to £82 and £75 in these cities respectively, enough for a perfectly comfortable room. The Cabinet Office confirmed that ministers have to stick to similar limits.

As a parliamentary appointee, however, Sir John can set his own standards. Asked why they are so lavish, his spokesman claimed that he stays at hotels "recommended by the host organisation". Really? In Edinburgh Sir John's host was the Scottish Auditor General – not a man you would expect to suggest a £300 bed for the night. A quick call to his spokesman revealed that he made no such recommendation.

So lying as well as junketing. Just what you want from the country's top watchdog and the current PM's adviser on ministerial sleaze.

PS: The *Eye's* efforts might already have saved the taxpayer a few grand. Sir John was lined up for the Maltese National Auditor's conference at the 5 star San Gorg hotel last Friday… but for some reason he couldn't make it.

TAX

Living on credits

GORDON BROWN's tax credit system – his main poverty-reduction policy – has descended not only into chaos but criminality.

Tax officials have admitted that overpayments of around £2bn are twice what they envisaged. Last year alone, according to a Public Accounts Committee report, 367,000 people disputed HMRC's right to recover what they had been overpaid, nearly half of them successfully as the payments were down to official mistakes.

Meanwhile organised fraudsters in 2005/06 blagged £131m mainly through internet claims using stolen identities and made possible, *Eye* 1164 exposed, by security standards that fell well below Cabinet Office rules. The onus was on officials to keep up the claimant figures so they could be spouted in response to critics, and mandatory safeguards were ignored. Nor has the problem been helped by corruption: HMRC admits that 33 officers are under criminal investigation, mainly for fraud, while nine have been charged and 15 convicted since April 2005. (And the government insists we shouldn't worry about it running a state identity register!)

So what did Brown know about the impending fiasco when he pushed through new tax credits? The *Eye* asked the Treasury what assessments it made beforehand, but our request is still under consideration as apparently there are "some complex public interest considerations". And perhaps some tricky don't-embarrass-the-next-PM questions, too.

Homes for votes

BRITAIN has long been a haven for foreign billionaires who declare themselves "non-domiciled" to escape their dues, but Gordon Brown has now extended the privilege of legalised tax dodging to those who own a second home abroad.

A longstanding ruse when buying a property overseas is to do it through a company in order to avoid local taxes. But UK tax inspectors spotted that, as a director of the company, the British owner was enjoying a taxable "benefit-in-kind" when using the house for holidays – and taxed it accordingly, effectively cancelling the wheeze for avoiding foreign tax.

However, there are hundreds of thousands of members of the holiday home-owning classes whose votes "new" Labour's new leader might need come the next election. So in his recent budget Brown included plans to scrap the benefit-in kind rule, sparing the tax avoidance scam. And not just from budget day, either: all tax bills run up under the old law are written off too, making this possibly the most generous tax break ever. Some second home owners will even get repayments!

Number crunching

20 ■ Number of "Countries of Concern" identified by Foreign Office for their human rights abuses

19 ■ Number of those to which the UK still exports arms

In the Back continues overleaf ➤

MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE

Mistaken identity

TWO YEARS ago, despite highly contentious identification evidence, teenager Sam Hallam (pictured) was convicted and jailed for taking part in a brutal mob killing of an Ethiopian refugee on an east London estate.

Now an extraordinary campaign to free him has sprung up, supported by some of the teenagers who admit to having been at the scene where Essayas Kassahun was fatally wounded. Some claim they even told police at the time that Hallam wasn't among them.

Kassahun, 20, died when he went to the aid of a friend, Louis Colley, who was being pursued by a gang of black and white youths in October 2004. Colley escaped but Kassahun did not. He was hit around the head with baseball bats and a sharp implement, possibly a knife or something sharp protruding from a bat.

Hallam was one of two young men convicted of murder and sentenced to life a year later. The other was Bullabek Ringbiong, 20. Seven others were acquitted, although one was convicted of conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm.

The only evidence against Hallam, of previous good character, was the word of two young people who said he was present. The first was Phoebe Henville, then 17, who told the trial she saw a white youth coming out of the attacking crowd. She recognized him but did not know his name. Later she heard a rumour that a "Sam" had been involved and someone named him as "Sam Hallam". But Ms Henville had told an officer at the scene that she had seen Kassahun being hit over the head by a black male wielding a baseball bat. In her first statement to police she had named and identified four of the other defendants in the case, but not Hallam. Nor, at that stage, did she mention the unidentified white youth.

However, the following day she was on the street with her younger friend to whom she had passed on the rumour that "a Sam" had been involved. Coming towards them was a youth. Her friend told Ms Henville the youth was Sam Hallam and that is when she first identified him as the youth she had seen.

The next day she made another statement to police describing Sam Hallam as having brown hair (which he has) and "strange features". But her young friend claimed Phoebe had first told her the white youth she had seen had blond hair.

The other witness was Bilel Khelfa, 20, a friend of the victim who knew Hallam as a younger pupil from school. In his first interview he described a white boy on a BMX bike who pulled out a baseball bat with a screw protruding from its edge. He said he couldn't see the boy because his hood was pulled up, but that he had "blondish" hair. By the time he made his second statement which identified the boy on the bike as Sam Hallam, he had talked to Phoebe Henville and she had told him it was Sam Hallam. In court he reverted to his first statement saying he had not got a good view of the youth's face because of the hood.

That was the only evidence against Hallam. There was no forensic evidence linking him to the murder; he had no clothing that matched the eyewitness descriptions; there was no evidence he ever owned or rode a silver BMX. And he had dark hair, not blond as Khelfa had originally claimed. What may have swayed the jury, however, was Hallam's failure to provide a firm alibi.

At the close of the prosecution case, there was an application that the identification was too weak and contradictory to allow a jury to convict. Hallam's barrister, Robert Fortune QC, argued that it was "shot to pieces" and "wholly incapable of belief". While acknowledging the flaws, the judge decided instead to warn the jury of the dangers of relying on such identification evidence.

Hopes that the conviction would be overturned were recently dashed when the Court of Appeal ruled that the judge was entitled to leave the identification matters to the jury, provided he had issued the correct warning. Even though the appeal court was "concerned" that in the summing up to the jury the judge had wrongly suggested that Khelfa was sticking by his second statement which identified Hallam when clearly Khelfa was not, this was not spotted by the prosecution or defence at the time.

Campaigners are now compiling a dossier for the Criminal Cases Review Commission. A statement from Kennedy Mwesezi, one of the original defendants who was acquitted, says that the attacking group had been led by youths on bikes. "The majority were black and there were only five or six white boys and I would have noticed if Sam Hallam had been one of them."

HOSPICE GRANTS

Death sentence?

A LANCASHIRE hospice may have to close after being refused funding for essential repairs by the Department of Health.

St Joseph's Hospice (known as Jospice – garden pictured) provides round-the-clock care for 12 terminally ill and long-term sick people at its Ormskirk base; but a Healthcare Commission inspection last year found many problems with the building, Hettinga House.

It was "not in a good state of repair externally", did not have an up to date electrical safety certificate and a ground floor dayroom was being used as a temporary bedroom. There were also problems with lift access. Not unreasonably, the report concluded that the requirement for the premises to be "safe and appropriate" for patients was not met and it demanded immediate improvement.

Last month the Department of Health announced £40m in grants for hospices, but for Jospice the news was heartbreaking. Its bid for £1.7m to build a new 12-bed centre was turned down; and it didn't get a penny for repairs at the Ormskirk site – especially galling when some grants went to projects like improving garden access and building multi-sensory rooms: good causes, maybe, but Jospice may now have to close within weeks if it can't find another way to bring its buildings up to standard.

Like most hospice care in the UK, Jospice relies on tireless charity fundraising rather than the NHS. The local primary care trust pays Jospice half the cost of caring for patients, so most of the funds raised go on staff pay and other necessities.

Jospice was founded by Father Francis O'Leary more than 40 years ago, starting with almost no funds at all. Since then it has cared for thousands of people in West Lancs and Merseyside.

The Healthcare Commission report noted: "There has been no proactive maintenance of the building since the first inspection... in 2002" and local "save our hospice" campaigners wonder why it was allowed to get into such a state. Jospice general manager Keith Cawdron told the *Eye* there had simply never been the money to carry out repairs.

No decision on closure has yet been made, but Jospice's bosses don't know what else to do. A second Jospice hospice in Thornton, north Liverpool, will remain open – in fact it was given one of the DoH grants, but the money isn't transferable – and the St Joseph's Hospice Association will carry on funding work with the terminally ill abroad. But for want of the money for repairs, a priceless service could be lost.

www.jospice.org.uk

LEGAL AID REFORM

Hull of a plan

MORE expensive gaps are emerging in the availability of legal advice across the country courtesy of Vera Baird QC, the junior justice minister reforming legal aid (see *Eyes passim*).

Solicitors firms in urban areas are no longer being paid for time spent travelling to courts outside their designated area. Nor will they be paid for delays in the legal process beyond their control – waiting for security firms to deliver prisoners or the Crown Prosecution Service to find missing files, say. The aim is to keep solicitors working locally to save costs. But, as ministers have been warned, some of the more "rural" courts don't have many, or indeed any, local solicitors to cover them.

Thus lawyers in Hull warned ministers that they would have to withdraw from providing "duty solicitor" cover at courts in Bridlington and Goole (both 30 miles away) and Beverley (10 miles) because they would be out of pocket. Goole and Bridlington have only one firm of solicitors apiece conducting criminal defence work and Beverley has none. The warnings were ignored, the law firms duly pulled out and the result is that the Legal Services Commission (LSC) has had to call on solicitors from even further afield than Hull – and pay them more!

At Beverley, for example, the LSC has roped in solicitors from the Public Defenders' Office in Darlington more than 100 miles away. Thus the "reform" is likely to boost the legal aid bill, rather than reduce it. When the danger was raised with Ms Baird, by the only solicitor conducting criminal defence work in Goole, she said the Hull solicitors were "playing the system".

What will she say when they take the Legal Services Commission to judicial review, as they are now threatening?

PFI

Stake & chips

THE extent to which public services have become tradable commodities under PFI is confirmed in a Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report that shows how 40 percent of private finance contracts have been flogged off by their original owners for huge gains.

Although financiers make billions out of the taxpayer, the PAC didn't ask for any of the money back. Which is good news for some familiar faces behind the latest big deal...

The PFI Infrastructure Company Ltd, set up in the Isle of Man in 2004 by former DIY magnate Richard Jewson and owner of stakes in 22 schools and hospitals from Salisbury to Argyll, is being snaffled up by Infrastructure Investors ("I2"), a private equity outfit run by Barclays and French Bank Société Générale. With a sale price of £160m, the investment funds owning the company will have doubled their money in three years, while the company's fund manager, Quayle Munro, will trouser more than £10m.

The transaction continues Jewson's strong run in extracting cash from PFI. He is also chairman of Octagon Healthcare, the consortium that screwed £82m from the "refinancing" of the Norfolk and Norwich PFI hospital in a deal the PAC labelled "the unacceptable face of capitalism".

His fellow director in the Isle of Man, David Steeds, is profiting from some earlier sterling work on PFI. He ran the Tories' Private Finance Panel for a few months in 1996/97 before an impatient Gordon Brown took over at the Treasury and imposed his turbo-charged PFI Taskforce.

By a remarkable coincidence, the chairman of the I2 private equity group that is buying the company was the man appointed to run that taskforce back in 1997, Treasury favourite Sir Adrian Montague. Welcoming the latest batch of contracts to his expanding stable, he looked forward to "delivering value for the enlarged group". No mention of pupils or patients there.

In the City

Planet Football: Fulham

RELEGATION may have been avoided and a new manager recruited but the financial situation at Fulham appears to be approaching a critical point for the phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed.

So much so that the Premiership club's auditor PKF found it necessary to insert a rare note in the latest accounts filed last month highlighting the "existence of a material uncertainty which may cast significant doubt about the company's ability to continue as a going concern".

At the same time there has been substantial shuffling of debts between Fayed's personal ATM, Harrods (which for some time has been in effect paying the players' wages), and the offshore company which ultimately controls Fulham.

The club made a loss for the 2005-6 season of £15.5m, just over £3m up on the previous year. This has taken total losses to more than £125m since Fayed bought the west London club 10 years ago. At the same time – June last year - the club owed almost £150m, mostly to Fayed-linked entities such as Harrods (UK), the immediate parent company of the Knightsbridge store.

The accounts have regularly been produced on a "going concern" basis reliant on the promises of support from Fayed who year after year increased the amount poured into the black and white hole by the Thames. And the directors are "confident" Fayed will continue his largesse although, they admit, "there is no legal obligation". But this time PKF clearly felt this was not enough.

"Emphasis of matter – Going Concern" is the dry sounding but telling note, which concludes the PKF audit report. After confirming that they have not qualified the accounts or dispute Fayed continued support for Fulham, the auditors nevertheless feel the need to state: "The company has incurred significant losses in recent years and has accumulated a significant deficit of shareholders' funds. These conditions indicate the existence of a material uncertainty, which may cast significant doubt about the company's ability to continue as a going concern. The financial statements do not include any adjustments that would result if the company was unable to continue as a going concern." In other words, the numbers could look very different, so don't blame us!

PKF signed off the Fulham accounts on 1 March – eight months after the year end. The accounts themselves were not filed until late April and indeed had to be refiled after Companies House requested an amendment. PKF found it necessary to give this warning despite the fact that by March Fulham had repaid almost £70m owed to Harrods (UK) with the aid of money from its offshore parent company in the British Virgin Islands and had borrowed £9m from Fortis Bank secured on TV rights – worth an estimated £4m in the season just ended.

The reason for the heightened concern is indicated in the directors' report – the financial cost of relegation, which on 1 March seemed a very real threat. Some two thirds of Fulham's income comes from being in the Premiership. Relegation would so reduce revenues that they "would not finance ongoing contractual commitments" – ie to the players. This would mean ever more reliance on the Fayed bank account and "action to significantly reduce operating costs" – ie let the good players go thereby reducing the chance of return to the Premiership. No wonder Fayed has been backing relegated Sheffield United and survivors Wigan in demanding that West Ham should have gone over the Tevez affair.

The soccer club is directly owned by another Fayed vehicle, Fulham Football Leisure (FFL), which in turn is owned by the BVI-registered Fulham Leisure Holdings (FLH) – the deep pocket from whence more than £100m has flowed. The FFL accounts contain the same "Emphasis of Matter – Going Concern" warning as the club's. Perhaps not that surprising as FFL has net liabilities of £144m having recorded losses of £150m!

But interestingly the FFL accounts – which have the same year-end as the club's – were signed by the directors seven weeks later on 19 April, nine days after Fulham manager Chris Coleman was sacked. The previous year both were signed off at the same time. Even more interesting, PKF did not sign the accounts for a further four days, on 23 April. Usually, as in the case of the soccer club, the directors and auditors sign off the same day. Last year there was just a 24-hour difference.

At 30 June last year FFL had net debt of a staggering £167m – more than £20m up on 2005. At that date £20m was owed to Harrods (UK) repayable within a year and a further £35.5m due after one year. This was secured on the Craven Cottage ground and other assets. It also owed £100m to its offshore parent FLH which, unlike Harrods, receives no interest!

But it seems that Harrods (UK) may have begun to find Fulham a luxury it cannot afford. On 16 July last year FLH pumped in a further £34.5m to enable the club to repay Harrods. Then on 10 January – weeks before the Harrods year end for accounts yet to be seen – FLH found another £35m with which Fulham could pay off its remaining debts to Harrods (UK) for payroll and trading loans. Perhaps the Harrods auditors Grant Thornton might have queried exactly how Fulham or FFL would have repaid that huge debt?

This would suggest that the BVI company FLH has now loaned Fulham and FFL a staggering £170m, presumably all interest free so providing no income. A year ago just £45m of the then £100m was secured and repayable from March 2008. Exactly how has never been clear.

So where has Fayed found the extra £70m which he has pumped into Fulham since July last year? One possible answer is the Harrods Holdings dividend – a second dividend of £47.5m was paid last year to the Fayed family before 21 July and that first FLH loan. Perhaps it will be revealed later in the year that an equally generous payment was made by the Harrods parent for the year that ended in January. Meanwhile, at least Craven Cottage can now be used as security for new borrowings.

It is no doubt completely irrelevant that also on 10 January Harrods itself granted a floating charge to the trustees of its pension fund securing "all monies, obligations and liabilities which shall from time to time be due owing or incurred" from Harrods Holdings or the store. The security included all the Harrods properties. The Harrods pension fund has assets approaching £200m but also had a deficit of more than £100m at January 2006 and Fayed has agreed to pump in an additional £9m a year for the next ten years.

But one wonders what Fayed's main bankers, Royal Bank of Scotland, make of his endless support for the financially as well as football-challenged Fulham. (Last December RBS took out a further charge on sub-contractor warranties provided to Harrods.) Especially when they read in the FFL accounts that although the directors have been assured "no repayment demand will be made which would either cause the repayments to be a preference of a creditor or which would cause the group to become technically insolvent" (a status it has already achieved in all but legal name) Fayed has provided written assurances that "continued funding will be made available to finance the group's working capital requirements for the foreseeable future, irrespective as to whether Fulham FC retains membership of the Premier League at the end of the 2006-7 season". It did but will next season be any different?

Manchester City

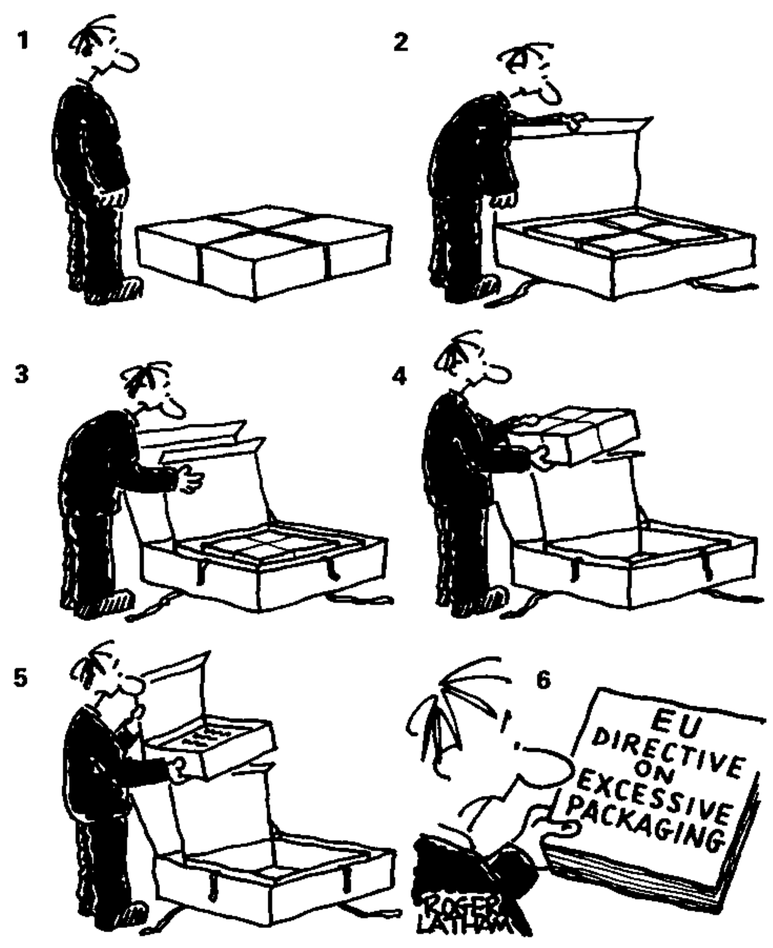
One rescue possibility was the sale of Fulham to Fayed's old pal, deposed Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Thaksin passed and moved on first to Liverpool and now to Manchester City.

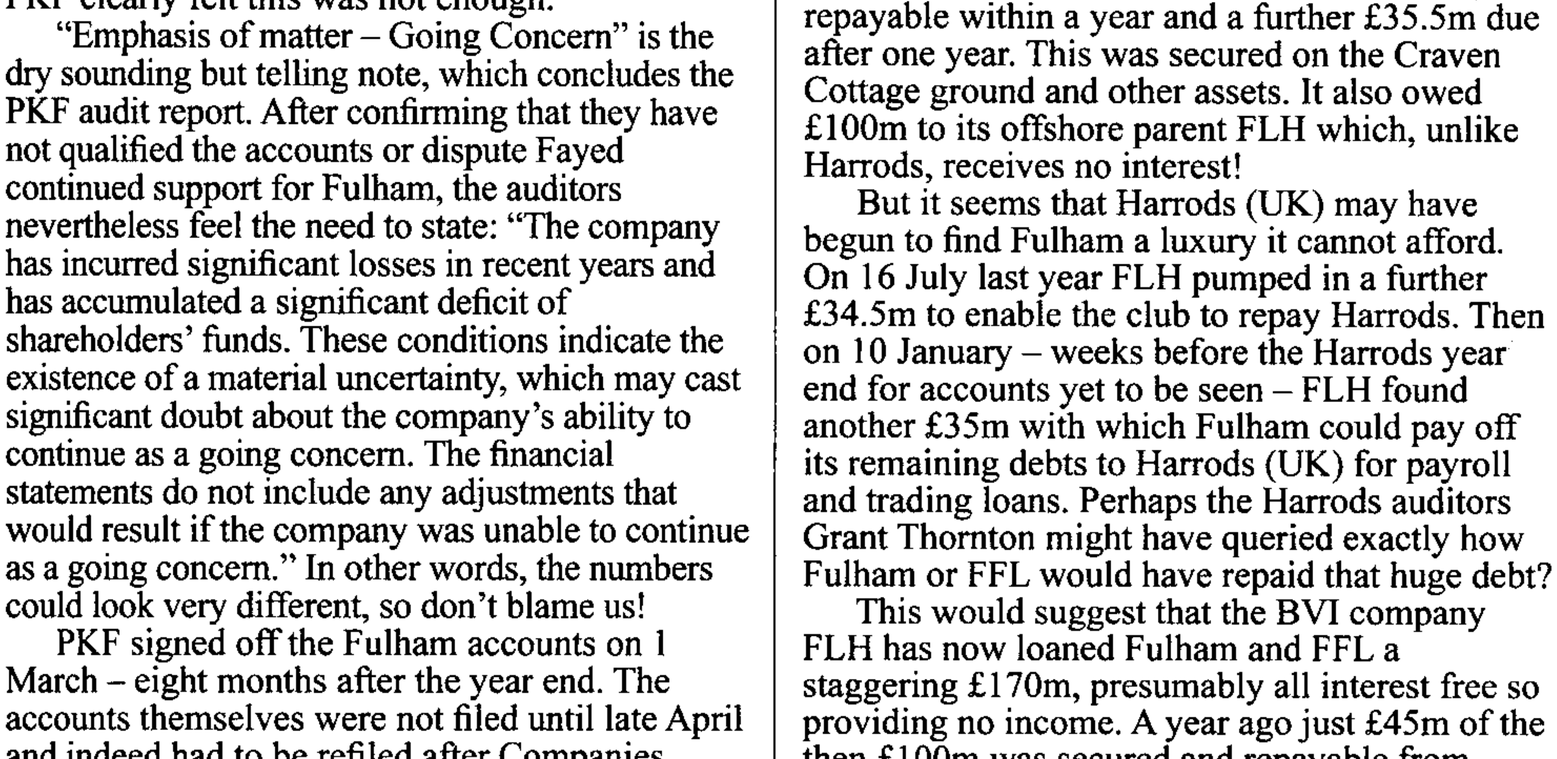
Thai government investigators and media besieged a Fayed-owned property in Park Lane where they believed Thaksin was staying after he flew into London following the military coup last September. Thai officials may well query the source of any funds Thaksin produces to buy and boost Manchester City, despite his previous career as a successful businessman. There have been allegations of corruption and tax fraud plus tales of suitcases of cash being flown out of Thailand. But no doubt none of that will worry the football authorities.

Chelsea

Roman Abramovich will have the FA Cup to show for his investment in Chelsea, which has comfortably crossed the £500m mark and is

See over ☛





heading towards £600m by the end of the year. The latest accounts for Chelsea Limited – the Abramovich company that owns Chelsea FC – show that as at the end of the previous season, which saw the club repeat as Premiership champions, the Russian oligarch had loaned £489m interest free.

Abramovich paid £60m for Chelsea in 2003 and by June 2006 had put in a total of £546m in share capital and loans via Chelsea Limited – the loans up £107m in the year. Further spending on players – a minimum net £17m this year – plus the £36m Eurobond due for repayment by December which means that then the £600m figure could well be within reach despite all that talk about self-financing.

Leeds

Former Chelsea owner Ken Bates has done nothing for his popularity by putting the relegated Leeds United into administration and minutes later agreeing a deal with receivers KPMG to buy it back leaving creditors with next to nothing.

Chelsea was itself on the edge of financial meltdown at the time that Abramovich arrived and made Bates a richer man. Creditors will vote on the Bates deal at a meeting on 1 June. Questions are certain to be asked about just how much of the claimed £22m was really invested in hard cash by the offshore investors backing Bates – if they have taken such a big and early bath, why are they coming back for more? - and where did that money go plus the up-to £12m realized from player sales and related payments? All that matters as every pound equals a vote. The deal agreed by KPMG (on the basis of Bates being the only buyer) looks like one of those Friday night, Monday morning "phoenix" deals with the same directors which gave liquidators a bad name.

Portsmouth

Plans to redevelop the Fratton Park ground as part of a £600m redevelopment confirms perhaps the real reason for Alexandre Gaydamak's interest in a perpetual Premiership also-ran. Especially given the extent of the modest investment made to date by the son of fugitive Israeli-based Russian billionaire Arkady Gaydamak. Gaydamak Snr faces trial in absentia on arms dealing charges in France.

The latest Portsmouth accounts show that as at May 2006 – months after Gaydamak junior replaced US-based Serb millionaire Milan Mandaric (now seeking to save Leicester City) – directors' loans were just £12m. It would appear that Gaydamak took over Mandaric's position and maybe added some £1.5m-plus guaranteeing the bank for £7.5m and whatever he paid for control together with money for new players. Just how much the club has spent on new players for the season just ended is not made clear in the accounts, despite these being signed off in February. The club has a £7.5m overdraft facility, which had not been used by May 2006 so that could have played a role in the new player signings.

Just how much profit there could be if the Fratton Park plan gets planning approval with a new stadium by 2011 is illustrated by the fact that the ground was valued at just £10m in 2003 and is carried in the accounts at under £14m.

Strangely, the Portsmouth accounts state that none of the directors – including Gaydamak – "hold any beneficial interest in the issued share capital of the company" despite elsewhere stating that the company is ultimately controlled by a BVI company, Devondale Investments, which is "controlled by Mr. A. Gaydamak" – presumably Alexandre, not Arkady, who insists, like his son, that he has no interest in Portsmouth. Devondale owns Portsmouth via Miland Development (2004), which has filed no accounts since it was formed (these were due in July last year) in breach of the Companies Act.

But then as all the above illustrates – on Planet Football things are different, very, very different.

'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 340

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 1 June 2007

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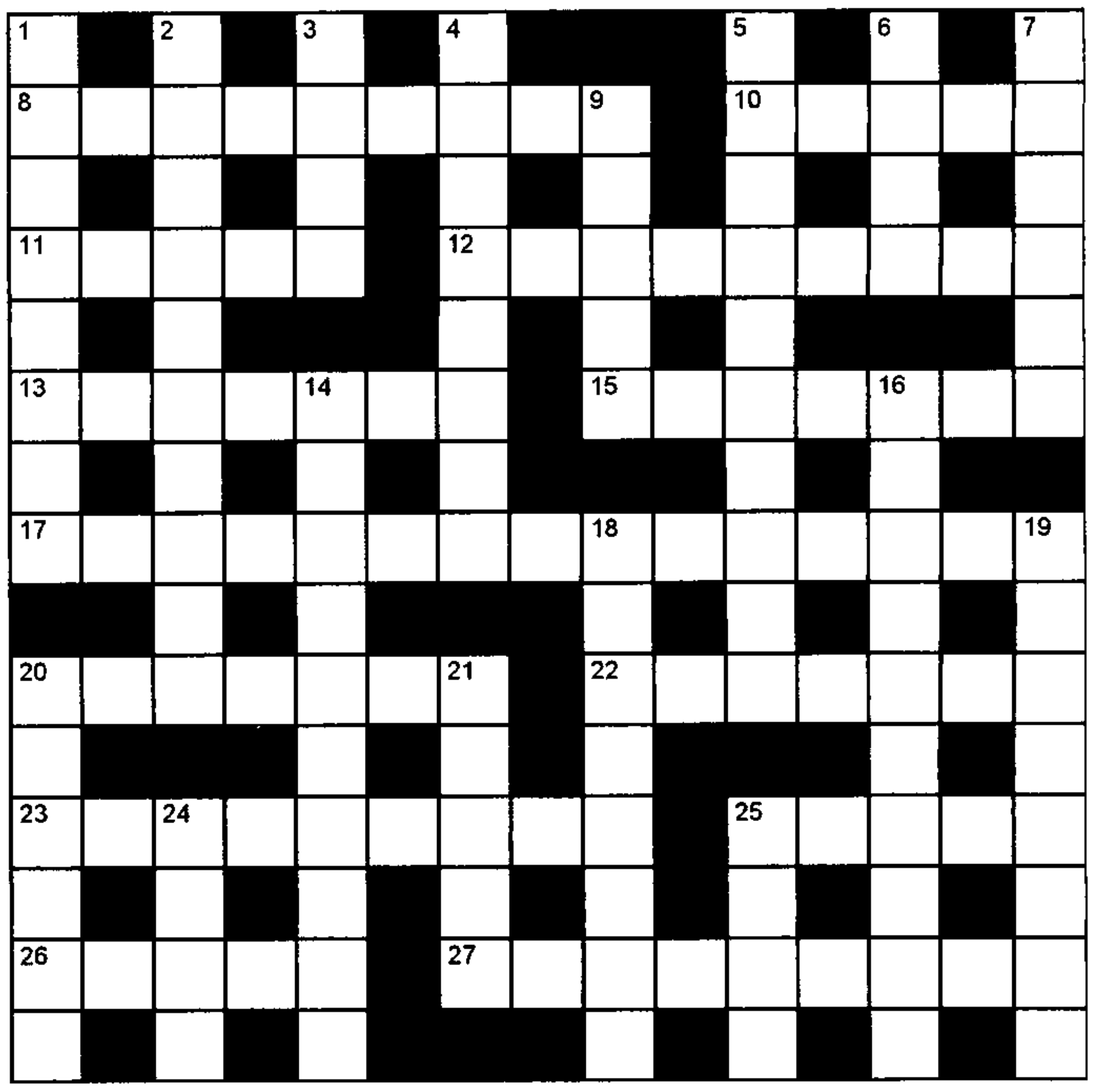


ACROSS

8 Openly gay with female clothing and fringes (9)
10 Bloody hell getting round Kent, etc. for England team usually? (5)
11 Be an establishment type (3,2)
12 Sufficient scope for ex-*Torygraph* editor to turn and squeeze chief of liars, Archer's thing (5-4)
13 Old John Major colleague, possibly gets off holding a celebrity (7)
15 Brenda repulsed by collective hacks' put down (7)
17 Bird? Yes, roughly about five – sounding a warning for the crime of taking pot while in moving car (5-2,8)
20 Without Clare's lead, is fast moving far to the right (7)
22 Labour lunacy – Miliband's first in for a slagging-off (7)
23 Restraints put on dukes' workmen taking smack (9)
25 Not so dull type handing out penalties (5)
26 Put out part of pelvis after topless bonking (5)
27 Maybe Trident nut is to be the leader (9)

DOWN

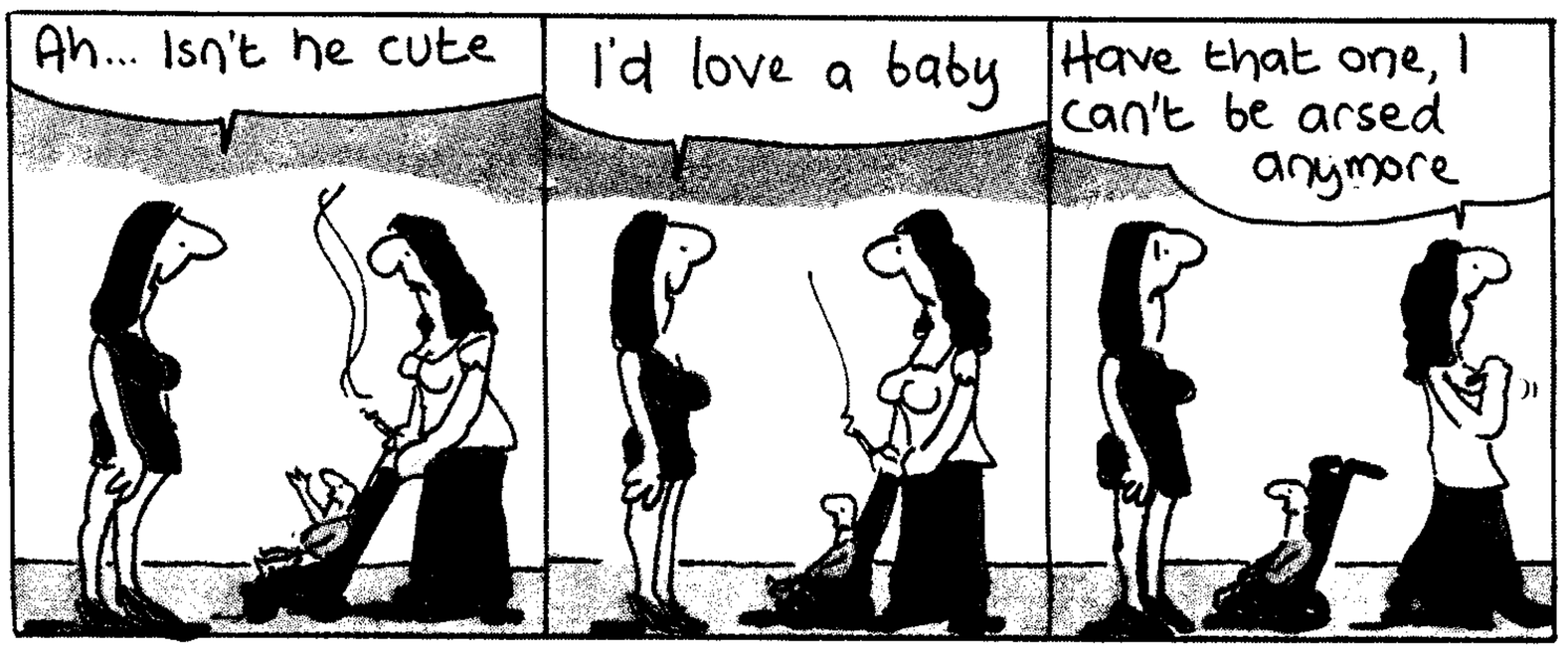
1 Less mediocre, Dobson, at adapting? (3,2,3)
2 "Senior Tory starts getting into something shocking", *Sun* figures (10)
3 Botha's arse-over-tip dodge (4)
4/25dn. The warmth of a welcoming hearth? A tragically ironic experience for our troops in Iraq (8,4)
5 A stand-in model of inflation that satisfies certain needs (4-2,4)
6 Quango's lopped housing capital (4)
7 "Titbits!" as an excited Boris Johnson might say? (6)
9 No longer pissed off, Boers? (5)
14 Done-in brother Clinton, no time to get screwed – a final bang ended his presidency (3,7)
16 Live broadcast: beware Hislop (inclined to be naughty) (4-6)
18 Aggressive salesman stuck bananas in the woman (8)
19 Campaign supporting the pink-hued lions that would not produce cubs? (3,5)
20 Top Nazi stuffed her in mink? (6)
21 Dicky, getting in way over, swells (5)
24 Cowboy's negative refusal to exercise? (4)
25 See 4dn.

Crossword 339 winner: B. LEWIS

ACROSS: 8 Sexual 9 Holy Land 10/21 Whipping-post 11 Flabby 12 Stupid 13 Thatcher 15 Home Secretary 17 Busybody 18 Secede 20 Temple 22 Piddling 23 Blissful 24 Maoist.

DOWN: 1 Red-hot 2 Rumpy-pumpy 3 Allied 4/22 Shag pile 5 Old flame 6 Ulna 7 Snobbery 13 Tacky 14 Chancellor 15 Housefly 16 Shove off 18 Sodomy 19 Danish.

HUSBAND



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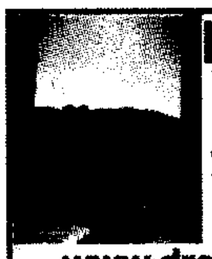

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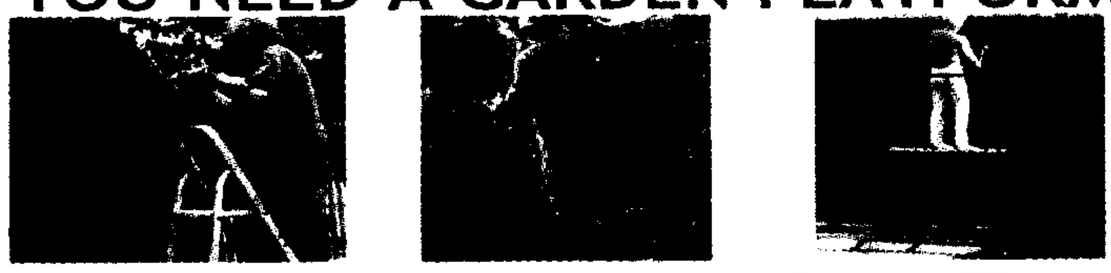

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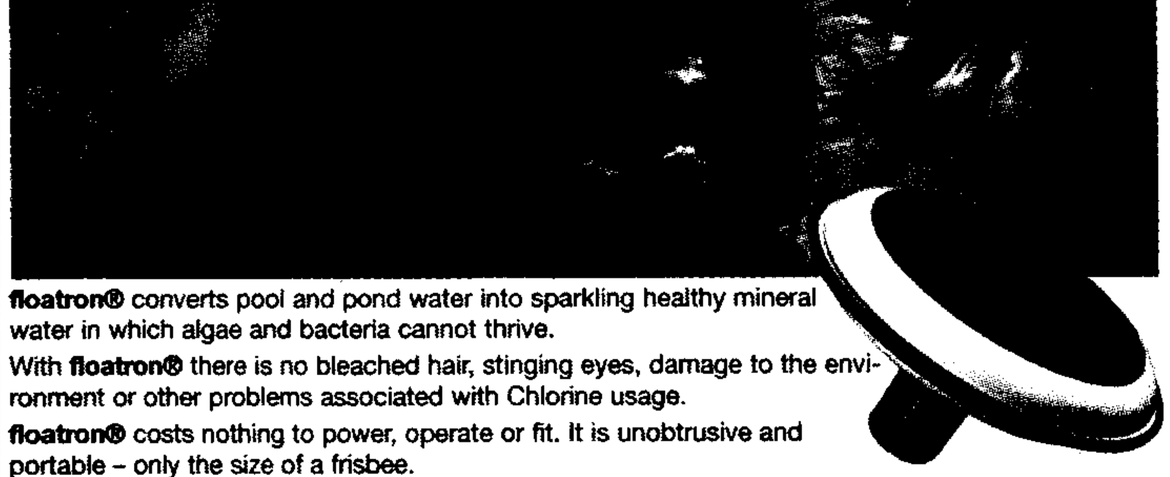

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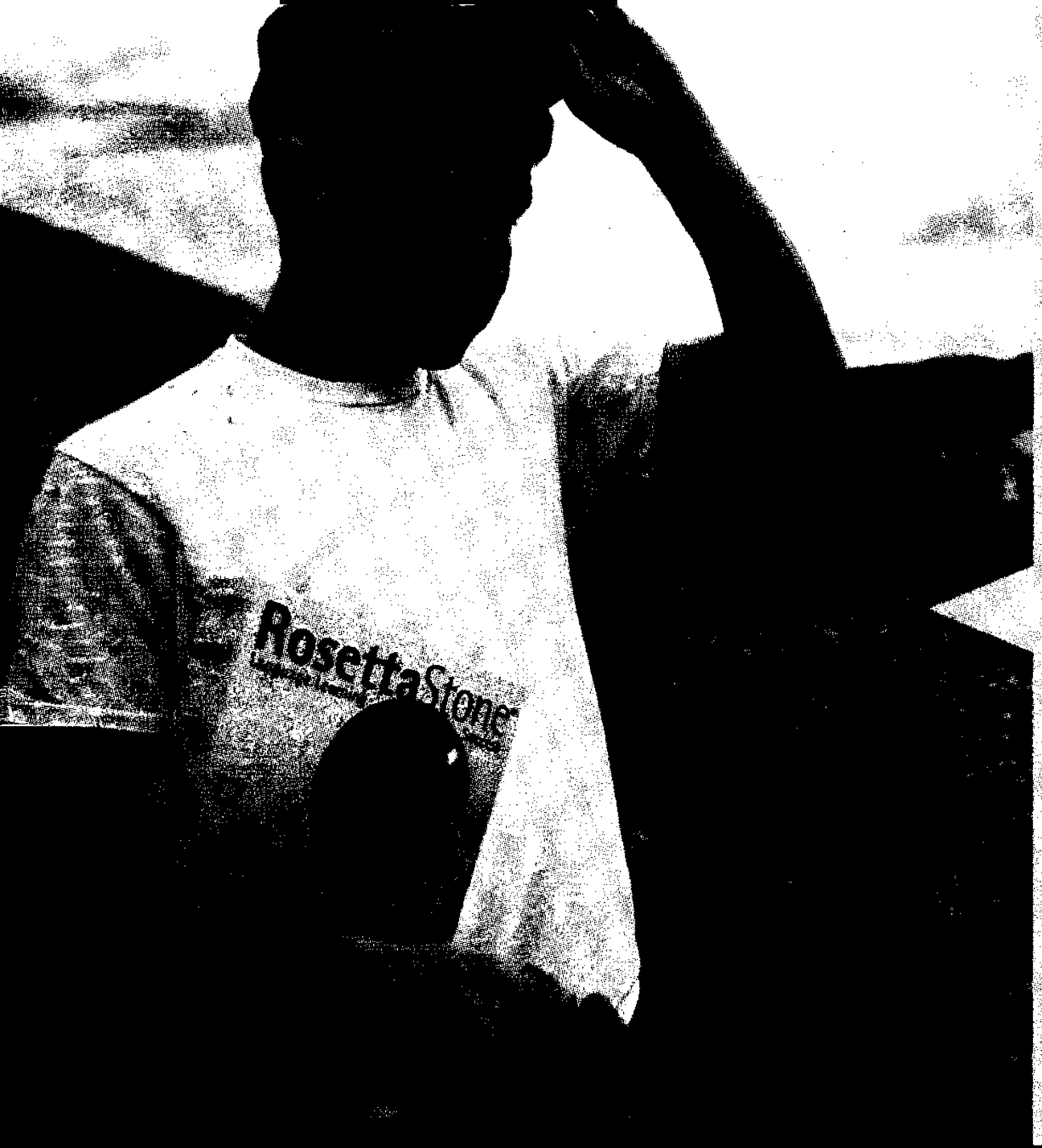

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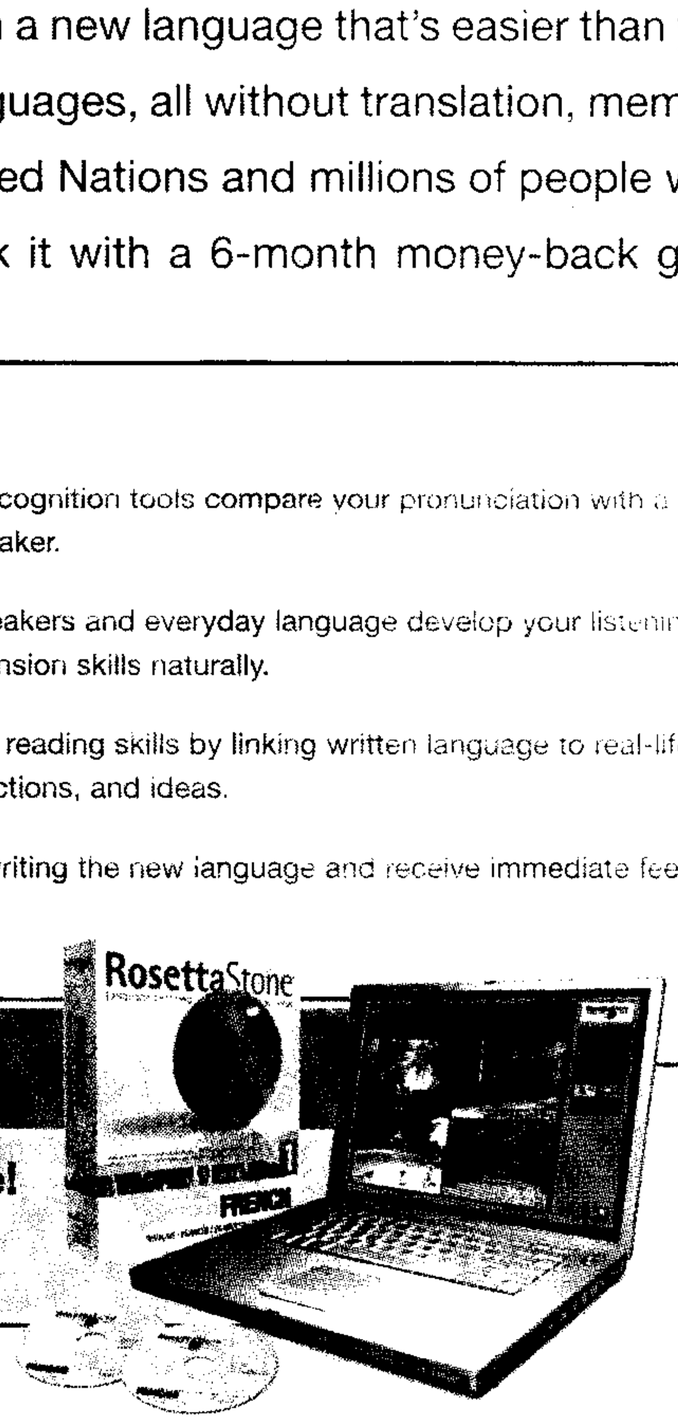

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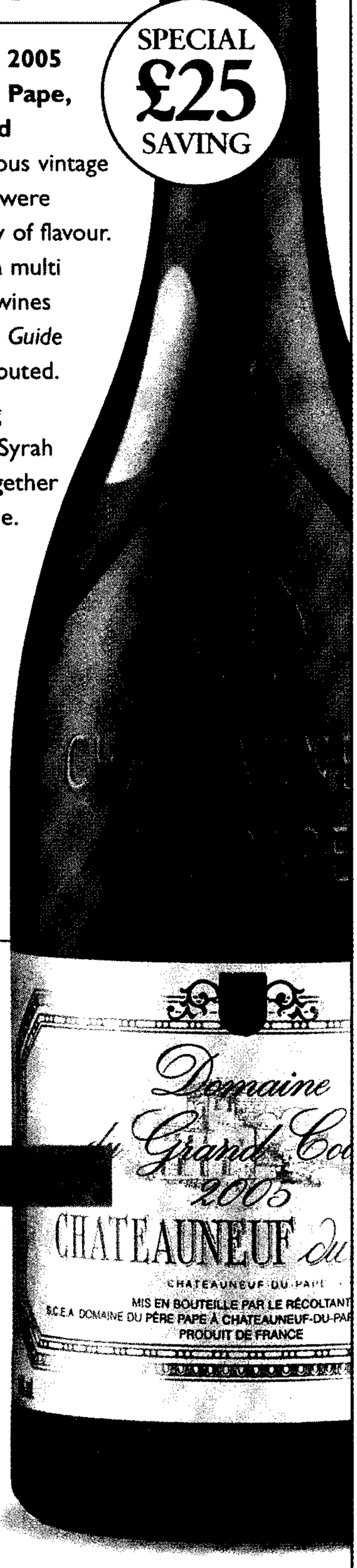

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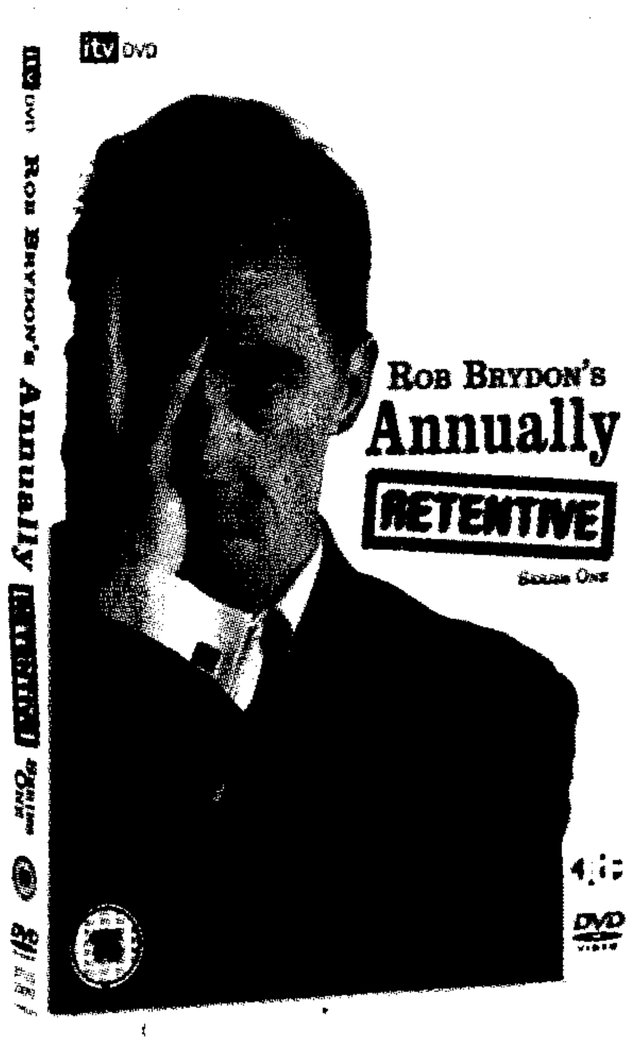

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A fitting end to the ill-fitting British suit

A suitable man to spark a men's clothing revolution

Consider this proposition. Would you rather pay the same sum for a single, off-the-peg, chain store suit cut by a computer and sold to you by a spotty boy who thinks side vents are to be found on a Lambretta scooter, or for two bespoke, custom cut, hand-stitched suits, measured and sold to you by a man for whom suits are a lifetime's passion?

The British clothing chain store has a lot to fear from ***Mr. Raja M Daswani*** of Kowloon. If there were a global ambassador for men's suiting, Mr Daswani, who owns and runs Hong Kong's biggest tailoring business, would be that man. He and his family team measure and make hundreds of suits a week for discerning clients across the world.

Indeed, so successful is ***Mr. Daswani***, that - a little unnervingly as he is measuring you up - he freely admits he doesn't really need to work any more: 'My team is as experienced as I am. But I just love men's suits and I wouldn't feel right sitting at home. It's not a business. It's a mission.

'I love seeing customers walk in a really bad suit that cost them a fortune and walk out in one of our suits that's perfect in every way, made with a good heart in a superior fabric for a half or a quarter as much.'

The price of a Daswani shirt and suit are astonishing. We are talking from £19 (£25 including tax and duty) for a custom shirt and £129 (£169 including tax and duty) for a fully lined, made-to measure suit in a lightweight wool or linen, to £250 (£325 including tax and duty) for a 100 per cent wool, entirely hand finished suit in a British cloth, with every refinement from handmade button holes to knee lining. Even the most expensive suit, made in deluxe superfine wool for £1,500 (£1,950 including tax and duty), costs a third less than it would on **Savile Row**.

Raja Daswani may be based in Hong Kong, but his sartorial mission to the badly dressed and overpaying British customer brings him to the UK as often as once a month. He and his team take over hotel suites in major cities, so British customers can make an appointment and get the full Kowloon Monty.

Measurements and digital photos are taken here and emailed to Hong Kong. Often, your suit will be started on by a tailor 6,000 miles away before you've even left the hotel. You can have it couriered within a week or so, or wait for a second fitting when the Raja team hits your town again a few weeks later.

It now remains to see whether the Raja revolution, with its inspired mix of artistic flair, entrepreneurial genius and digital technology, will see the end of the off-the-peg British chain store suit. On price alone, it's a sartorial solution that will even please the Suits in accounts.

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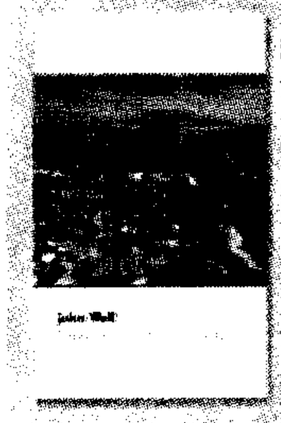

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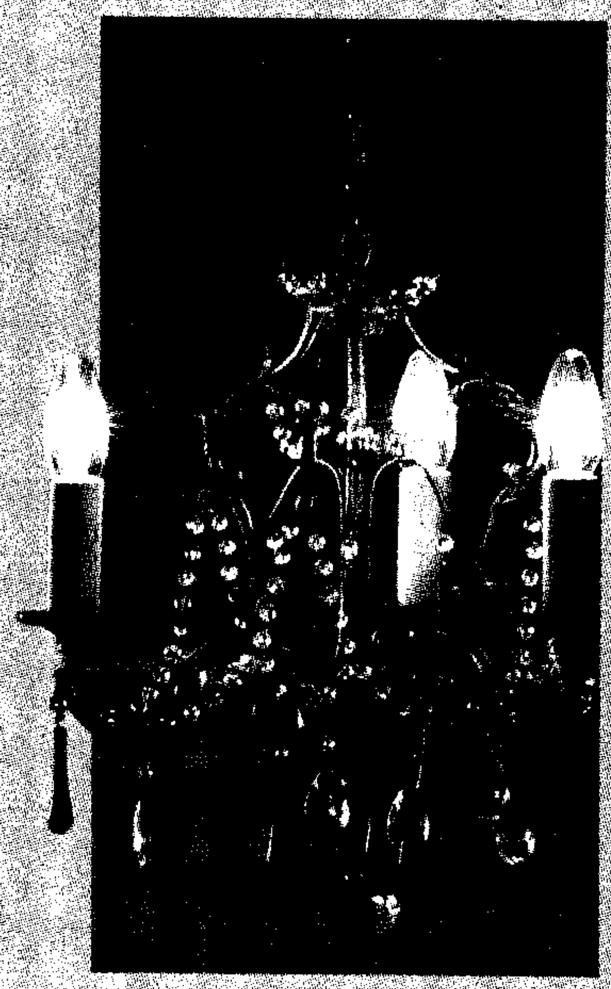

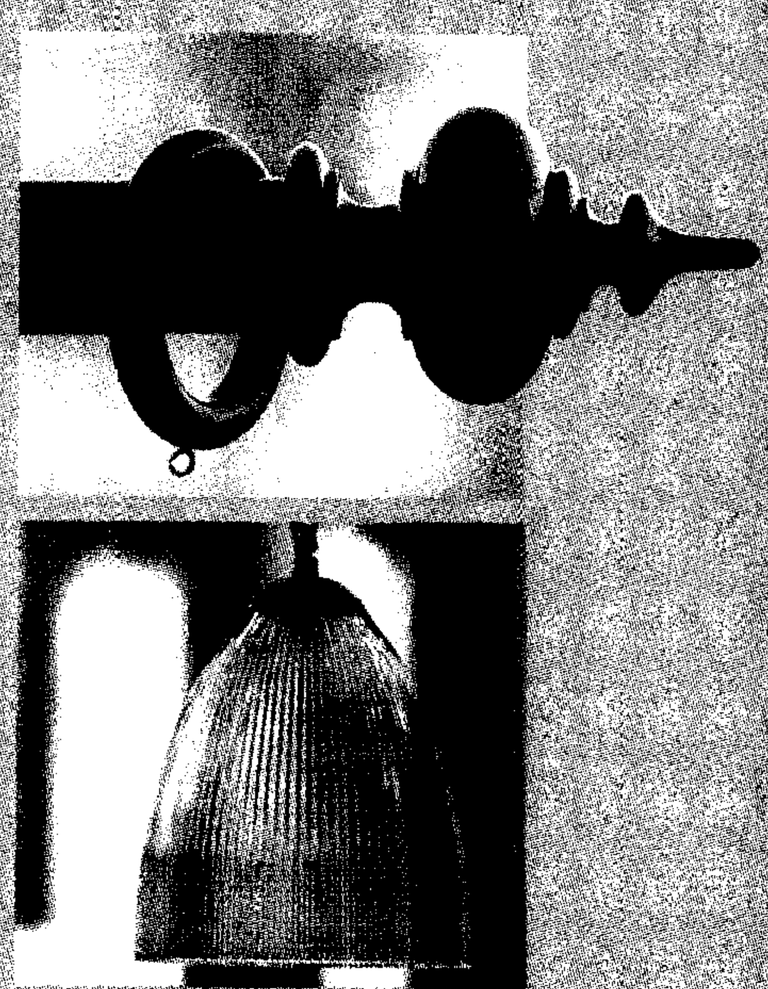
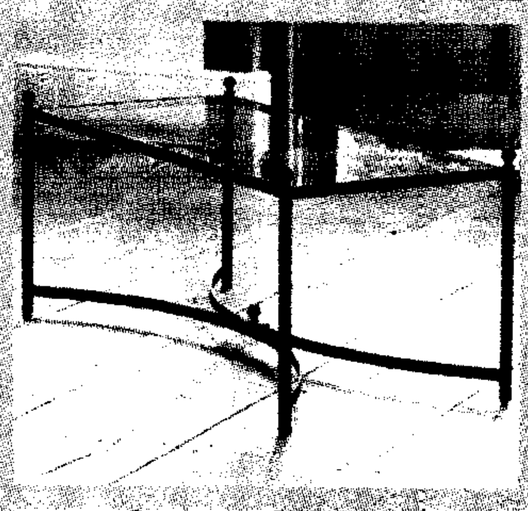
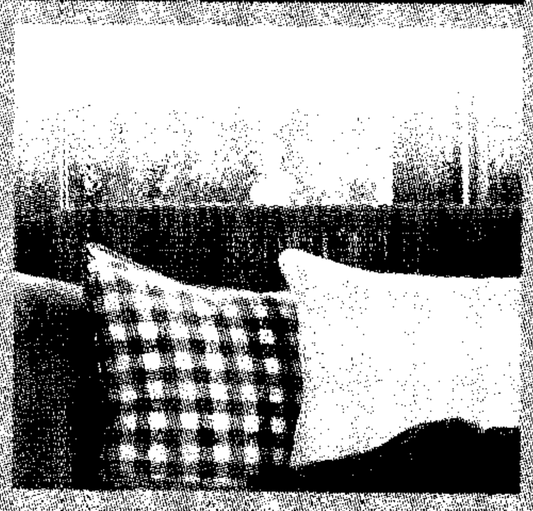

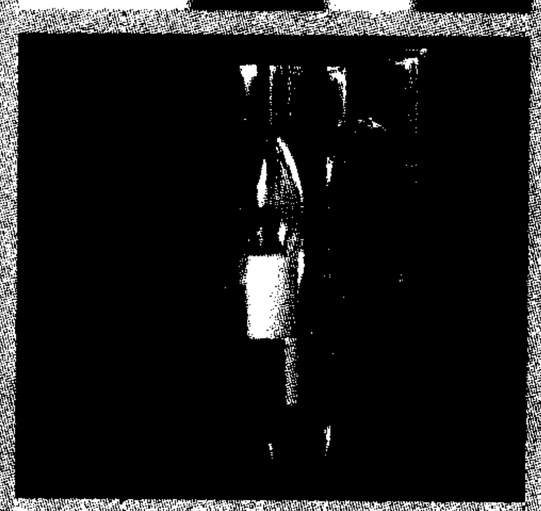
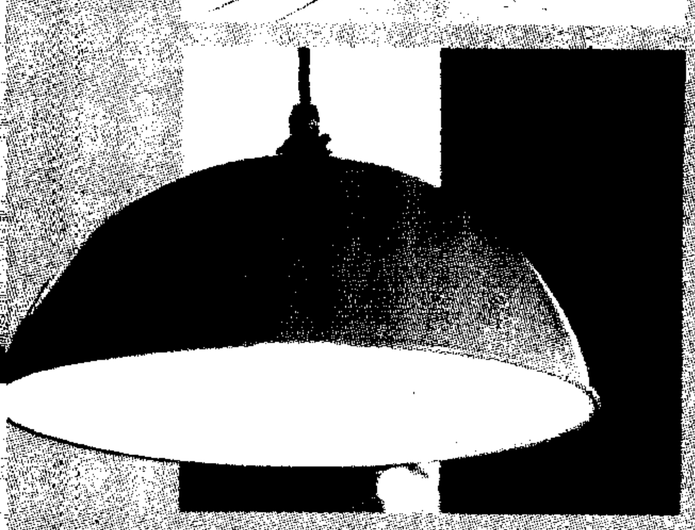
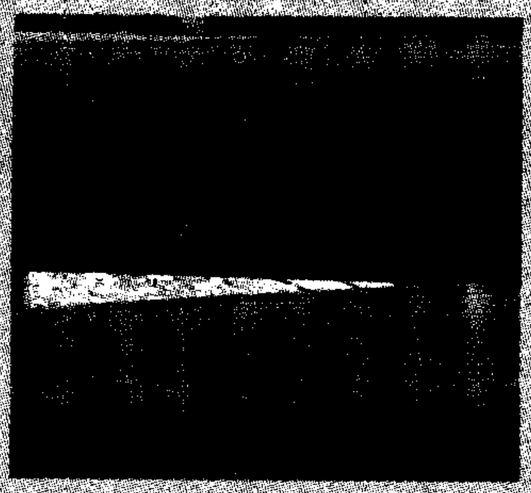
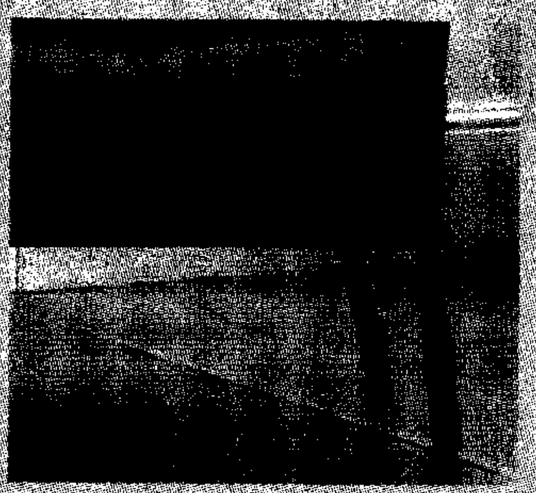
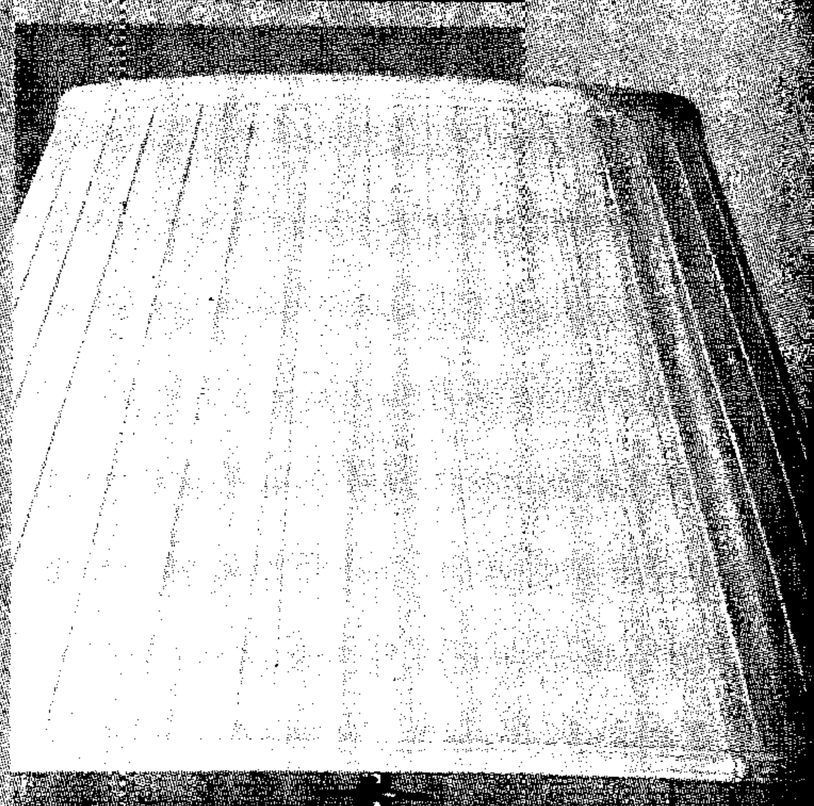

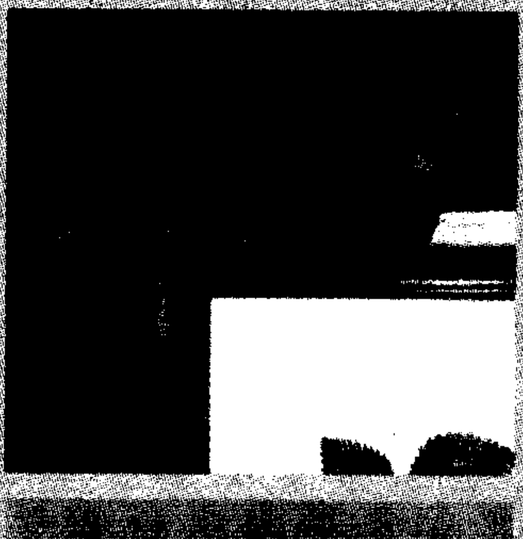
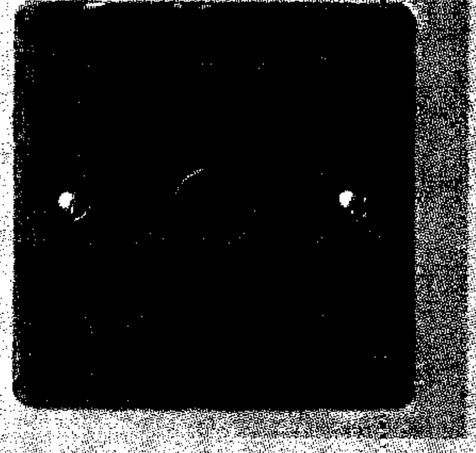
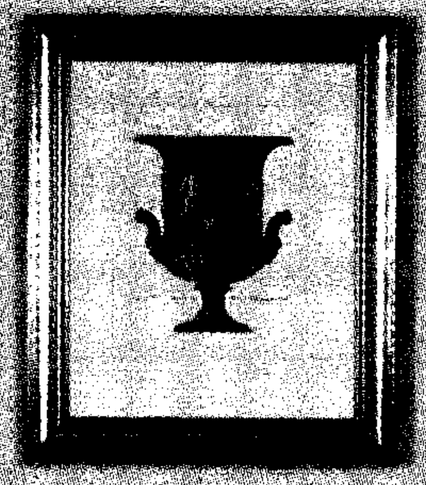
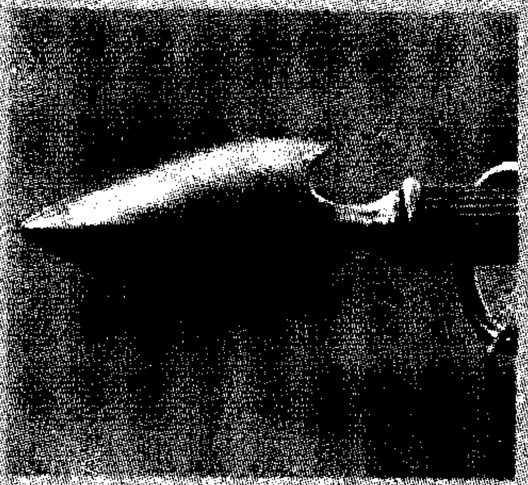
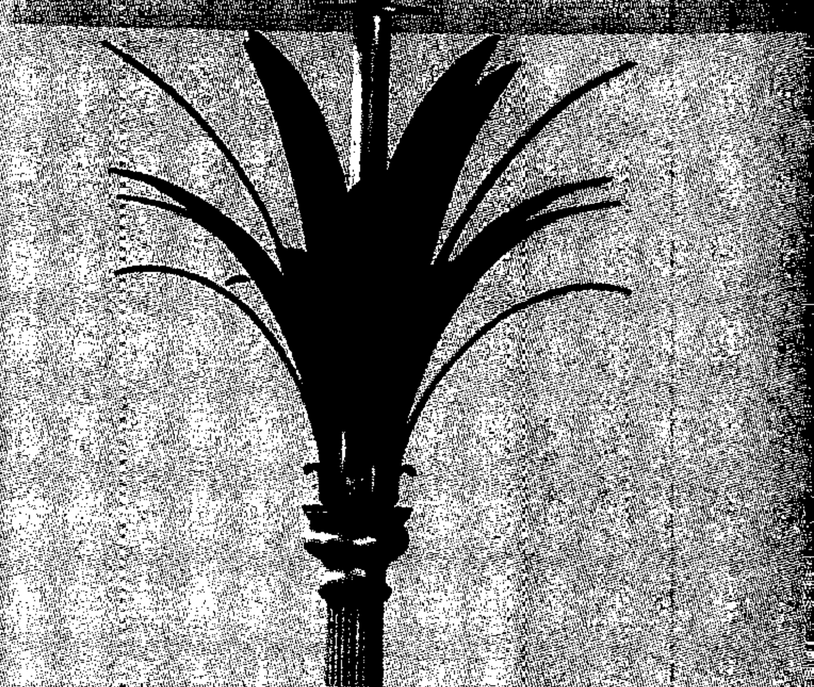

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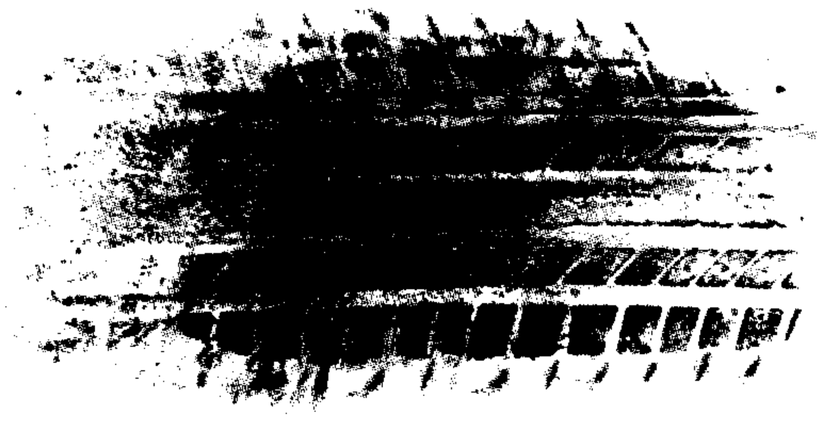

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